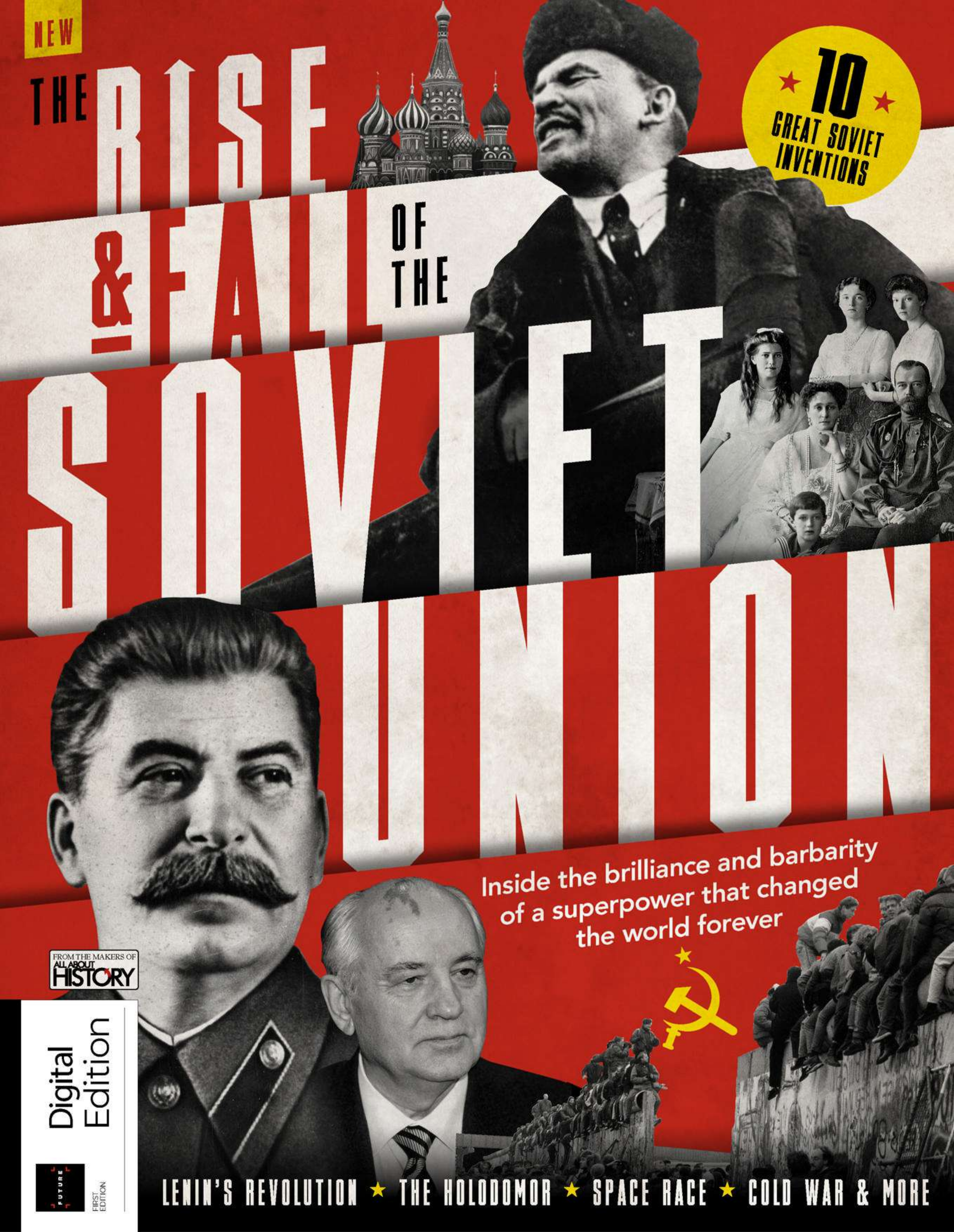
NEW

THE RISE & FALL OF THE SOVIET UNION



10 GREAT SOVIET INVENTIONS

Inside the brilliance and barbarity of a superpower that changed the world forever

FROM THE MAKERS OF ALL ABOUT HISTORY

Digital Edition

FUTURE
FIRST EDITION

LENIN'S REVOLUTION ★ THE HOLODOMOR ★ SPACE RACE ★ COLD WAR & MORE

WELCOME, COMRADE

Sometimes, to build a new world, you must first burn the old one down. Only then can you sift through the ashes and plant the seeds of change. In October 1917, a firebrand by the name of Vladimir Lenin unleashed a revolution in the seething streets of Petrograd that would change Russia and the blood-soaked lands beyond its borders forever more.

However, the birth of the USSR did not herald the dawn of a communist utopia, the stated goal of Lenin and his followers. Instead, it ushered in a new age of secrecy, suspicion and widespread technological advancement.

So how did this superstate controlled through suppression and terror come to create groundbreaking inventions, send the first artificial satellite into space and produce literary and cinematic icons? How was it able to survive the ravages of civil and global wars and stand toe-to-toe with America? And why did this once indestructible colossus collapse like a house of cards in 1991?

The answers to these vital questions await you in the following pages. Prepare to explore the shadows of a state where the truth won't set you free and nothing is quite what it seems.

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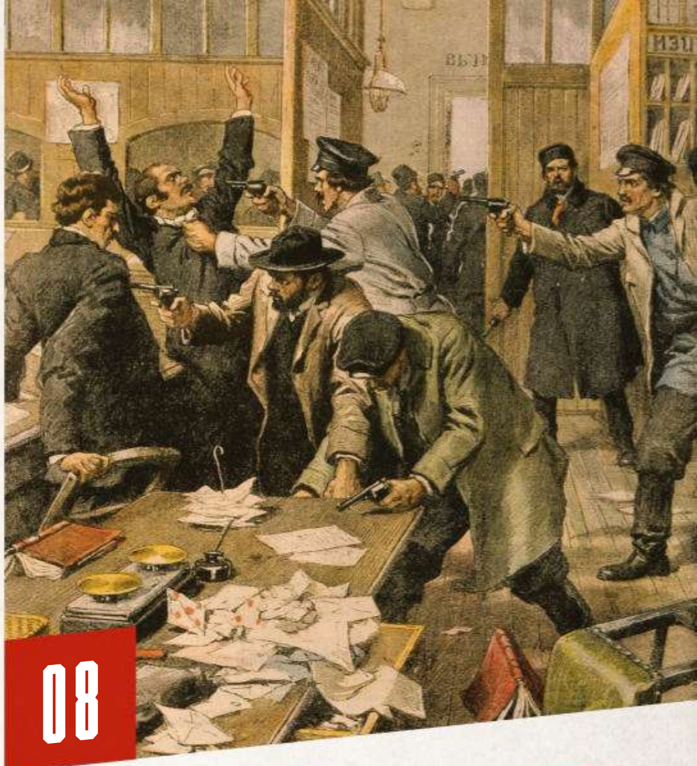

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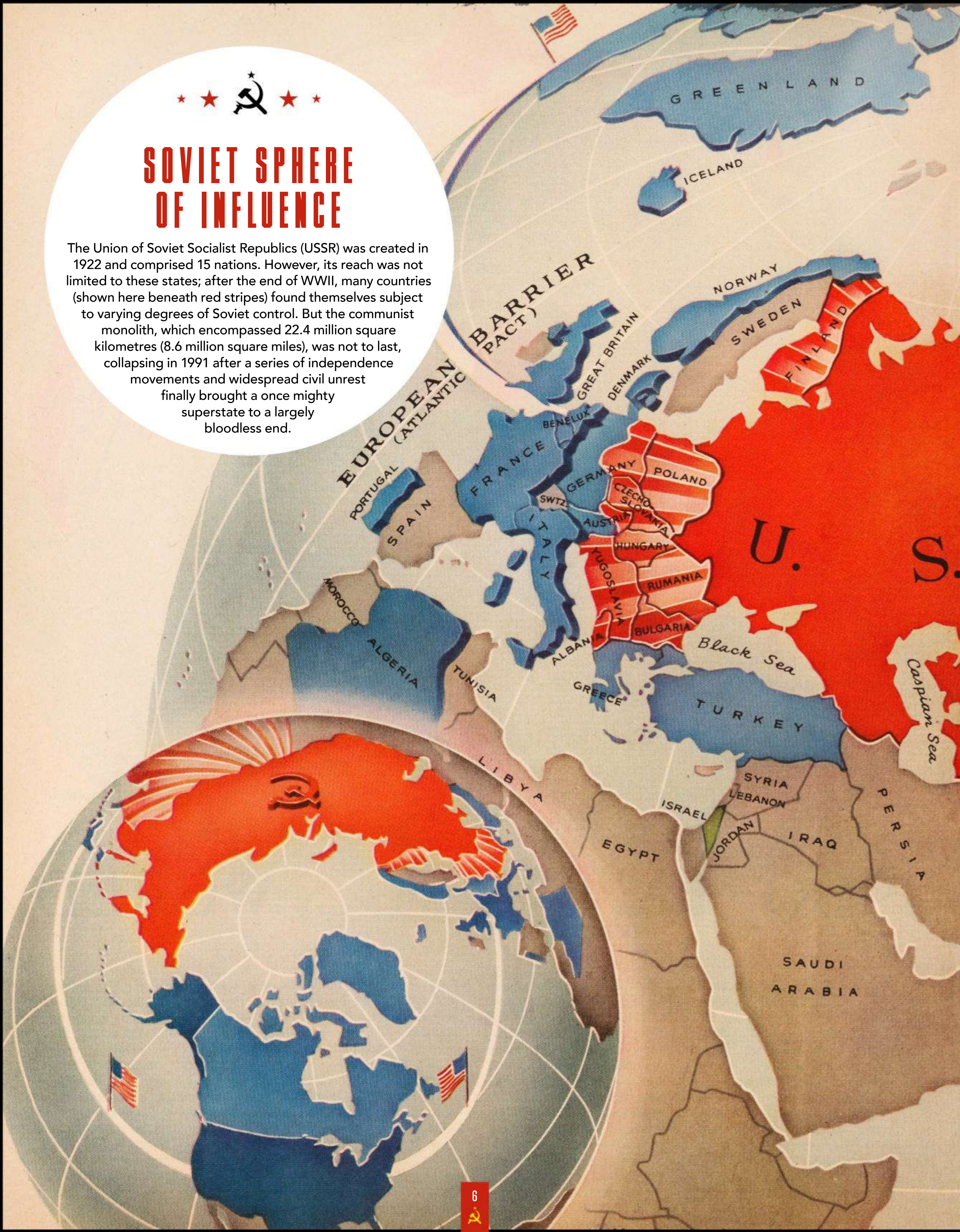
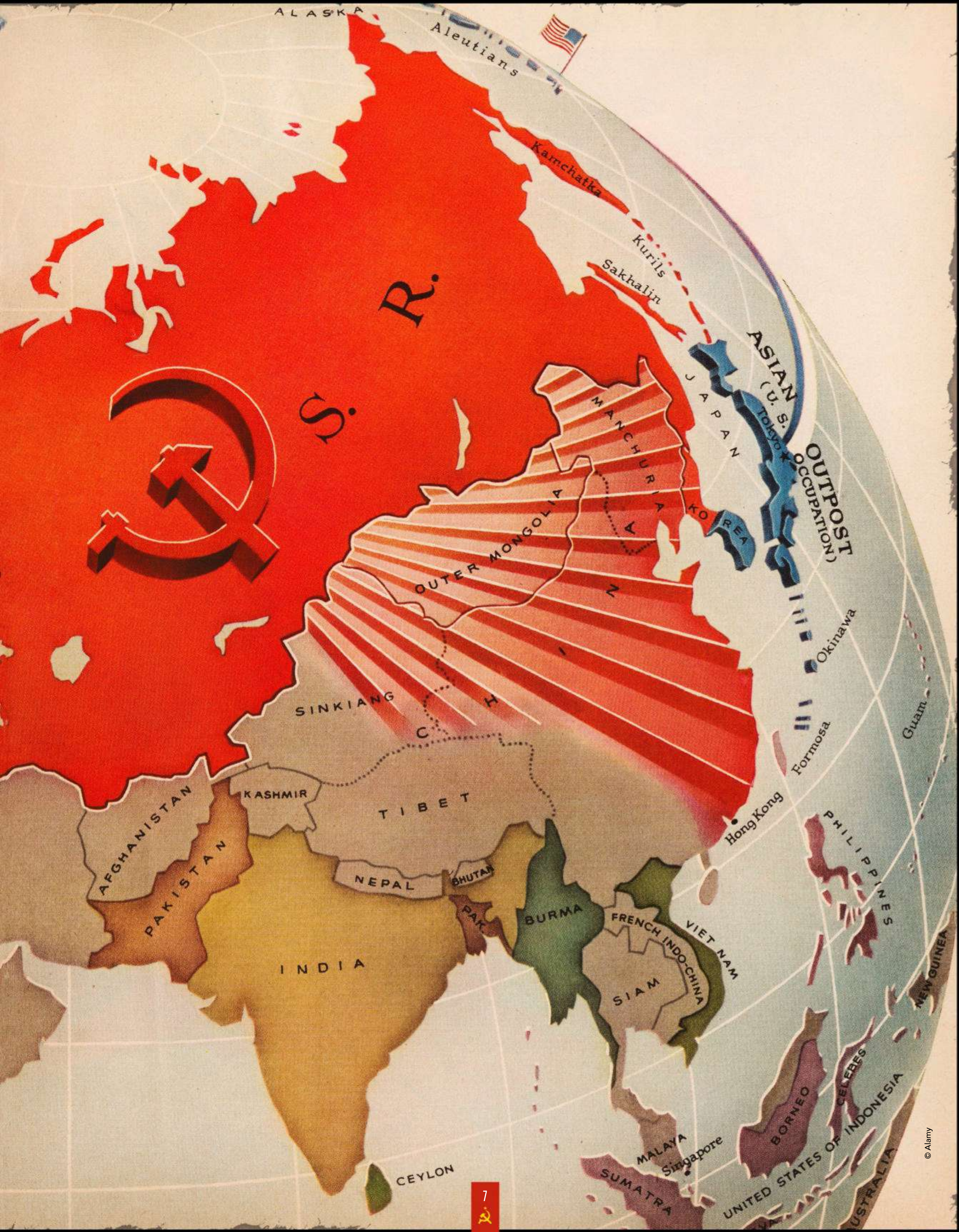
SOVIET SPHERE OF INFLUENCE

The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) was created in 1922 and comprised 15 nations. However, its reach was not limited to these states; after the end of WWII, many countries (shown here beneath red stripes) found themselves subject to varying degrees of Soviet control. But the communist monolith, which encompassed 22.4 million square kilometres (8.6 million square miles), was not to last, collapsing in 1991 after a series of independence movements and widespread civil unrest finally brought a once mighty superstate to a largely bloodless end.


GREENLAND
ICELAND
EUROPEAN BARRIER
(ATLANTIC PACT)
NORWAY
SWEDEN
FINLAND
GREAT BRITAIN
DENMARK
BENELUX
FRANCE
PORTUGAL
SPAIN
GERMANY
POLAND
CZECHO SLOVAKIA
SWTZ.
AUSTRIA
ITALY
HUNGARY
YUGOSLAVIA
RUMANIA
BULGARIA
ALBANIA
GREECE
MOROCCO
ALGERIA
TUNISIA
Black Sea
TURKEY
Caspian Sea
U. S.
LIBYA
EGYPT
ISRAEL
SYRIA
LEBANON
JORDAN
IRAQ
PERSIA
SAUDI ARABIA


ALASKA
Aleutians
Kamchatka
Kurils
Sakhalin
S. R.
ASIAN OUTPOST
(U. S. OCCUPATION)
JAPAN
Tokyo
MANCHURIA
KOREA
OUTER MONGOLIA
CHINA
Okinawa
Guam
Formosa
SINKIANG
Hong Kong
PHILIPPINES
KASHMIR
TIBET
AFGHANISTAN
PAKISTAN
NEPAL
BHUTAN
PAK
BURMA
FRENCH INDO-CHINA
VIET NAM
INDIA
SIAM
NEW GUINEA
CELEBES
BORNEO
UNITED STATES OF INDONESIA
MALAYA
Singapore
SUMATRA
VA
USTRALIA
CEYLON

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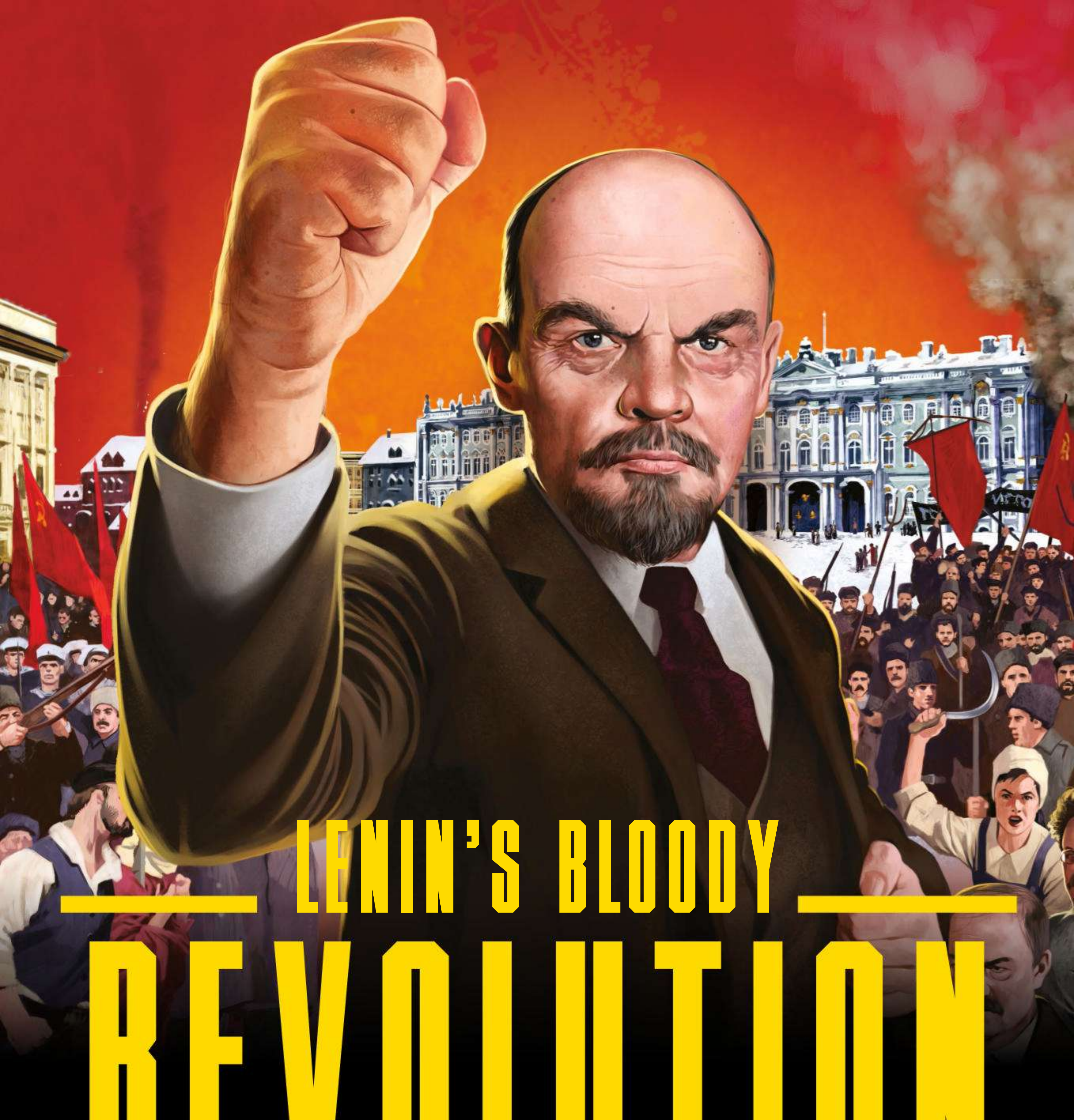


LENIN'S BLOODY REVOLUTION

Years of civil unrest came to a head in October 1917 as Lenin rode a revolutionary wave into Saint Petersburg and turned society upside down

THE ROAD TO REVOLUTION

MAY 1896
Nicholas II is crowned Tsar, making clear he'll continue the autocratic rule of Alexander III.

JULY 1903
The Russian Social Democrat party splits into two factions: the Bolsheviks, under Lenin, and the Mensheviks.

JANUARY 1905
Tsarist troops open fire on demonstrators in Saint Petersburg, causing widespread strikes. June sees a mutiny aboard the battleship Potemkin.

OCTOBER 1905
Nicholas II ends the unrest by promising increased civil liberties for the proletariat. The Duma is formed.

JULY 1914
At the outbreak of war, Nicholas II assumes control of the Russian Army. His family come under the damaging influence of Rasputin.

FEBRUARY 1917
Protests turn to riots in Saint Petersburg. The city falls to insurgents; the Duma collapses into chaos.

MARCH–APRIL 1917
Nicholas II abdicates and the Provisional Government forms. Lenin returns and sets up a base in Saint Petersburg.

JULY 1917
Alexander Kerensky becomes prime minister of the government, but it remains largely powerless, lacking legitimisation.

OCTOBER 1917
Bolsheviks take Saint Petersburg and storm the Winter Palace. Lenin controls Russia.

NOVEMBER 1917
In elections, the Bolsheviks lose. Clever politicking from Lenin sees his party hold onto and consolidate power regardless.

КРАСНАЯ ГВАРДІЯ
ЗАВОДА
ВУЛКАНЪ
II. ГР.

Members of the Red Guard in October 1917

Guns roared, thousands of voices yelled from the streets in defiance, and on 23 October (OS) / 5 November (NS) 1917, the massed supporters of Vladimir Lenin laid siege to Saint Petersburg's Winter Palace, the site of an ineffectual government and the capstone event of a socialist revolution. For Lenin and his troops it was both a political and an ideological victory: the triumphant end to years of secretive theorising and plotting, many of them spent by Lenin in exile, before he returned to Russia to 'liberate' his people. If the celebrations were short-lived, the inversion of society to replace an autocracy with a socialist system was an extraordinary achievement.

Russia, even as late as the late 1800s, had seen a nobility of about a million presiding over a peasantry of 97 million; according to an 1897 census there was practically no middle class. Industry was overwhelmingly agricultural, with the peasantry working on land that belonged to the rich minority. An act of 1861 turned some of this land over to communal peasant ownership, but the government had provided compensation to the landowners, and the peasant communes were now responsible for the repayment of this debt to the government. These payments were abolished in 1905, but until then the peasants were as beholden to their communes as they had been to the landowners.

The population was also steadily increasing, which meant there wasn't enough land to go around, leading to unrest. The oil and railway industry booms of the Industrial Revolution happened slower and later in Russia than in other parts of Europe, but when they arrived they started to create a growing middle class more inclined towards western-style capitalist business interests than had hitherto been the Russian norm. Workers migrated to industrial areas, but while some official monitoring nominally took place, the overcrowded slum conditions workers had to endure were appalling.

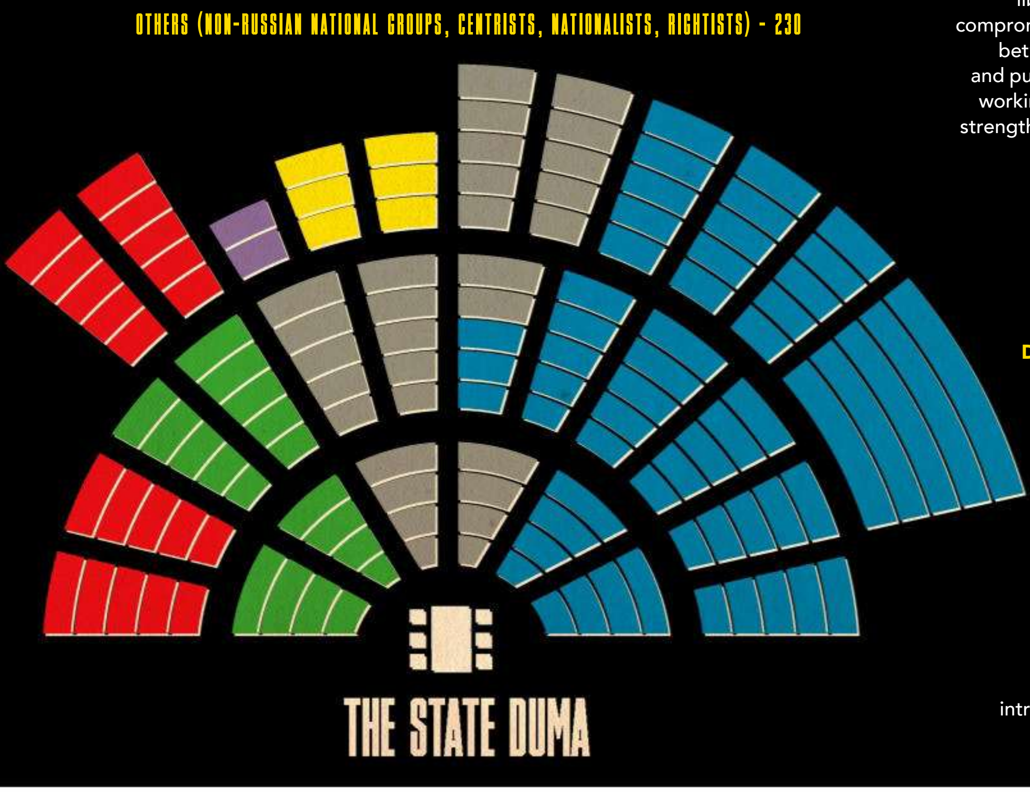
Russia at this time was presided over by the Tsar, whose rule was propped up by the army, the police, the Russian Orthodox Church, the land-owning nobility and the bureaucracy. Alexander II (1855–81) had brought in some reforms, such as elective assemblies to represent peasant agricultural and industrial workers in local government. Alexander III (1881–94), however, began to roll back these changes, and Nicholas II, the last Tsar of Russia, disappointed many by sticking to that hard line. He considered any notion of societal reform "a senseless dream" and let it be known that he was resolutely committed to the principle of autocracy.

As early as the 1860s various seeds of revolutionary thought were beginning to be sown. Populist movements began musing on a future that moved away from a monolithic state and more towards a country with a multiplicity of mutually supportive communes. These idealistic notions hit something of a bump when students from the universities started taking the message out into the countryside and found the peasant agricultural labourers actually hostile to their ideas, thinking the students' well-intentioned notions ridiculous, lofty and unachievable. Populism was abandoned, and in its place the ideas of a political analyst called Karl Marx began to find favour.

Marx was often frustrated at the way his followers simplified his complex writings and ran with them in directions he didn't approve of, but the key idea of his that people latched on to revolved around the control of the means of production. History, Marx believed, was a never-ending process of change in which particular social classes exploited the labour of everyone else and established dominance, only for their hegemony to become outmoded, after which they were naturally replaced by another up-and-coming class drawing power from unanticipated sources. They in turn would eventually be replaced for the same reasons.

By this process, the bourgeois (the middle class) in Russia would, according to the theory,

The Duma was instituted to represent the voices of working people in 1905. As Lenin launched his revolution, its seats were occupied as follows:



TRUDOVIKS – 10 SEATS
The Labour Group, or 'Trudoviks', were a breakaway from the Socialist Revolutionaries, since the SR had refused to participate in the Duma. They were a moderate socialist party (the name 'Trudovik' meaning 'labour') that grew out of small worker collectives.

BOLSHEVIKS – 15 SEATS
Lenin's faction of the Russian Social Democratic Party was committed to the overthrow of the tsarist autocracy and the redistribution of power to the proletariat. Unlike the Mensheviks, the Bolsheviks still believed that a small ruling elite was necessary.

PROGRESSISTS – 41 SEATS
The Progressive Party consisted of moderate liberals who believed the time was right for the bourgeois, not the proletariat, to assume control of Russia. Two of the party's prominent members would go on to be part of the Provisional Government.

OCTOBRISTS – 95 SEATS
The Union of October 17 was a non-revolutionary conservative liberal party looking for compromise and co-operation between the government and public forces. They were working towards reforms to strengthen the existing order, not to overthrow it.

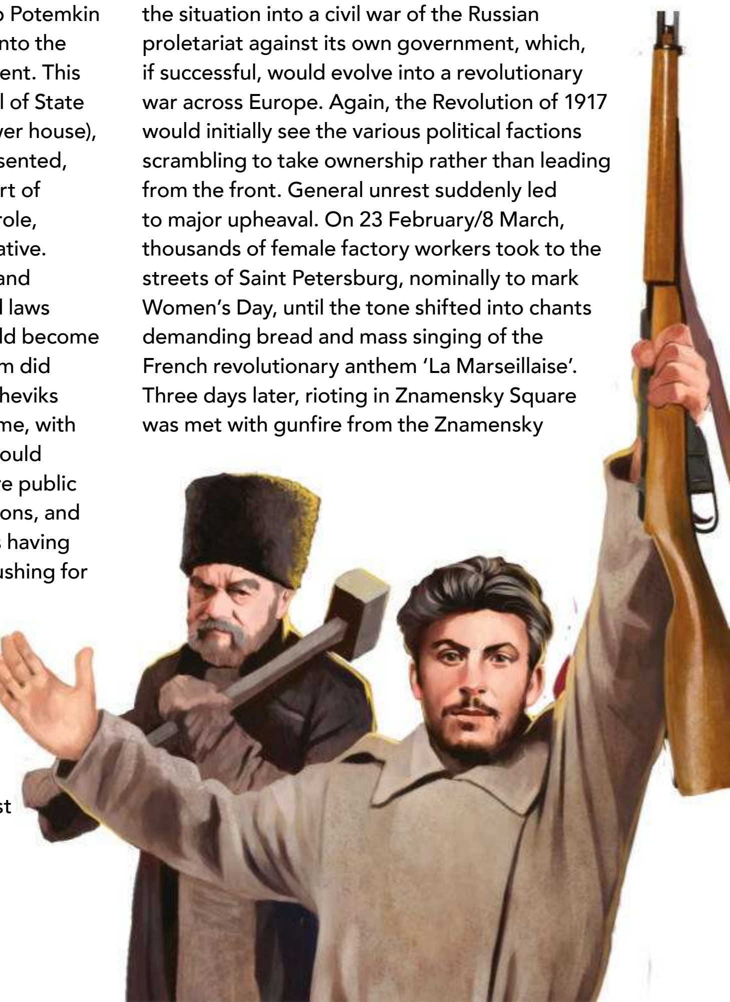
CONSTITUTIONAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY – 57 SEATS
Informally known as the 'Kadets', the Constitutional Democratic Party were liberals who had the support of professionals and academics. They were committed to workers' rights through policies like the introduction of the eight-hour working day.

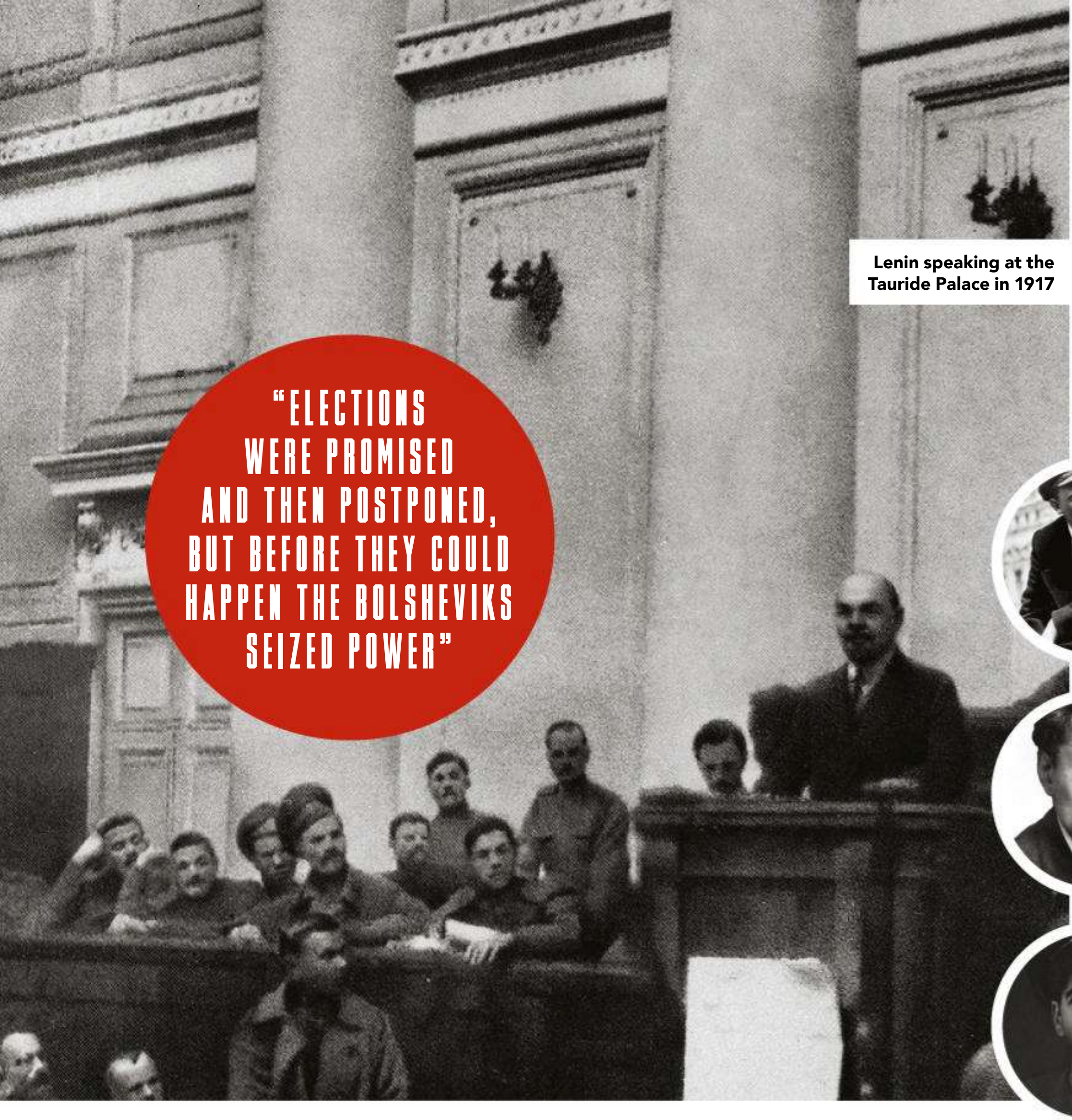
replace the aristocracy, and only once that had happened would the proletariat (the working class) supersede the bourgeois in their own revolution. Rather than leaving these predicted events to work themselves out in their own time, however, various groups intent on forcing the process started to come into existence. The Social Revolutionary movement grew out of Populism, still intent on establishing a vast mass of worker cooperatives. But the Russian Social Democrats were the ones that really ran with Marx's theories. Finding that they couldn't quite agree even among themselves, the Social Democrats soon split into two factions: the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks. The key figure of the Mensheviks was Julius Tsederbaum, who would come to be known as Martov. Central to Bolshevism was Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, later better known as Lenin. Martov believed in a grass-roots democracy where everyone had an equal voice. Lenin insisted on the necessity of a small intellectual elite controlling the revolution.

As it turned out, revolution first broke out organically in 1905 without either of them being directly responsible. On 9 January, a union of factory workers demonstrated outside the Winter Palace in Saint Petersburg and were fired on by the military, resulting in more than 100 deaths. A general strike followed; several officials were assassinated, including Tsar Nicholas II's uncle Grand Duke Sergei, the governor-general of Moscow; peasant revolts broke out in various provinces; and the crew of the battleship Potemkin mutinied. Tsar Nicholas was persuaded into the concession of forming a national parliament. This was divided into two houses, the Council of State (the upper house) and the Duma (the lower house), which would give the proletariat a represented, elected voice. But Nicholas stopped short of actually giving the Duma any power: its role, controversially, was to be purely consultative.

Some reforms were achieved. Health and education systems were put in place and laws were changed so that the peasantry could become landowners if they so chose – half of them did so by 1915. In-fighting between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks continued during this time, with the former positing the idea that they should swap their underground status for a more public relationship with the now-legal trade unions, and the latter, viewing the bourgeois class as having been weakened by recent events, still pushing for a full proletarian overhaul of society.

Then, in 1914, came war, where inflation ran rampant in Russia, crippling taxes were imposed, and the peasantry were reduced to barely surviving at a level of subsistence farming. The Mensheviks largely supported Russia defending itself against Germany. The more radical Bolsheviks, fronted by the vocal Lenin, advocated flipping the situation into a civil war of the Russian proletariat against its own government, which, if successful, would evolve into a revolutionary war across Europe. Again, the Revolution of 1917 would initially see the various political factions scrambling to take ownership rather than leading from the front. General unrest suddenly led to major upheaval. On 23 February/8 March, thousands of female factory workers took to the streets of Saint Petersburg, nominally to mark Women's Day, until the tone shifted into chants demanding bread and mass singing of the French revolutionary anthem 'La Marseillaise'. Three days later, rioting in Znamensky Square was met with gunfire from the Znamensky





Lenin speaking at the Tauride Palace in 1917

> "ELECTIONS WERE PROMISED AND THEN POSTPONED, BUT BEFORE THEY COULD HAPPEN THE BOLSHEVIKS SEIZED POWER"

The Provisional Government in Petrograd, 1917

KEY FIGURES

BOLSHEVIKS

VLADIMIR LENIN

Leader of the Bolsheviks

The revolutionary thinker and politician steered Russia into a communist revolution and was its premier from 1917 until his death from a stroke in 1924, aged 53. His body lay in state for four days and was viewed by almost a million mourners.

LEON TROTSKY

Chairman of the Revolutionary Committee

Initially a Menshevik, Trotsky joined the Bolsheviks for the 1917 revolution and was instrumental in its success. He was later expelled from the Communist Party and exiled for his opposition to Stalin. He was assassinated in 1940.

JOSEPH STALIN

Member of the Central Committee

A minor player in the 1917 Revolution, Stalin rose through Bolshevik ranks until he took the leadership following Lenin's death. His rule turned Russia into an industrial power, but he was also responsible for the deaths of millions in the Gulags.

PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT

PRINCE GEORGY LVOV

Minister President/Minister of the Interior

The first post-imperial prime minister of Russia, Lvov was the first head of the Provisional Government following Nicholas II's abdication. A veteran of the Duma, he failed to garner much support and resigned after just four months in position.

ALEXANDER KERENSKY

Minister of Justice/Minister of War and Navy/ Minister President

The Trudovik Kerensky took over the Provisional Government in July 1917. Unpopular with the military, he was deposed by the revolution. He fled and remained in exile until his death in 1970.

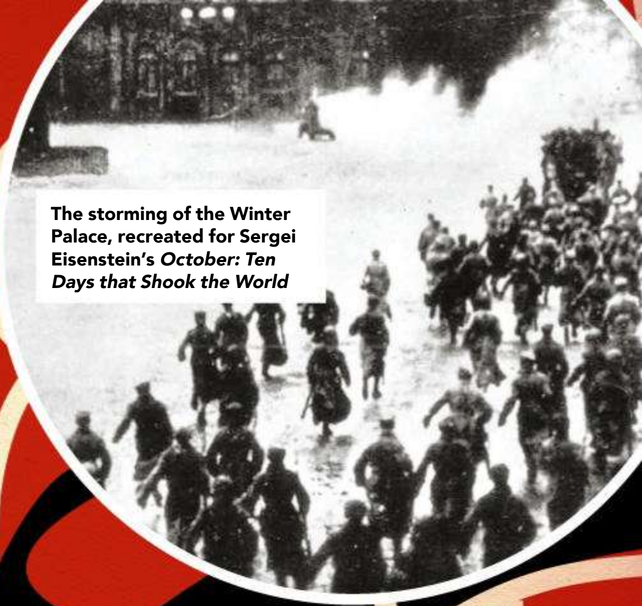
VIKTOR CHERNOV

Minister of Agriculture

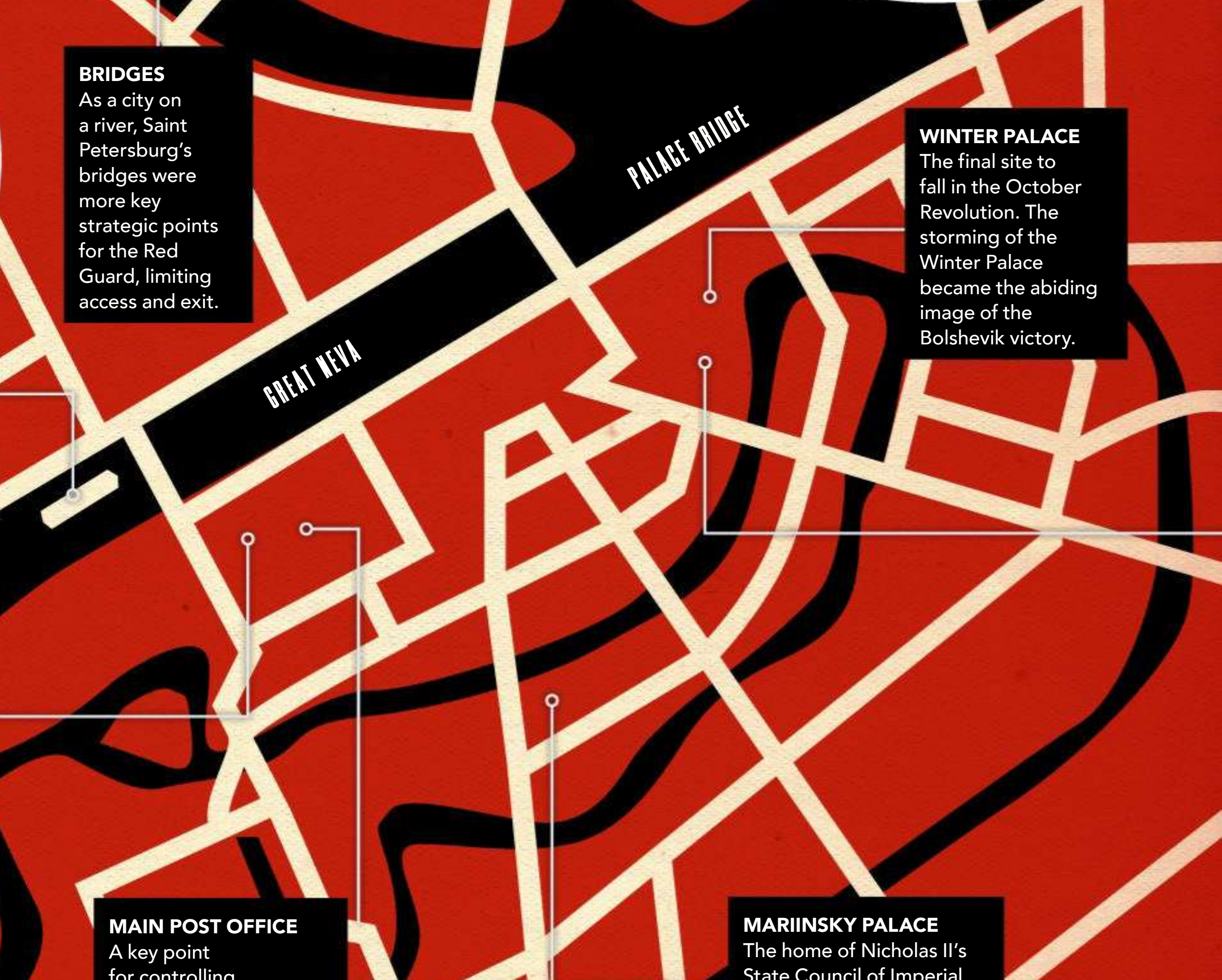
One of the founding members of the Russian Socialist-Revolutionaries, Chernov was a formidable political analyst – some called him the 'brain' of the party. Following the Bolsheviks' seizure of power he, like Kerensky, fled to Europe.

THE OCTOBER UPRISING

In October 1917, Lenin's Red Guard stormed the streets of Petrograd, taking over several strategic points



The storming of the Winter Palace, recreated for Sergei Eisenstein's *October: Ten Days that Shook the World*



BRIDGES
As a city on a river, Saint Petersburg's bridges were more key strategic points for the Red Guard, limiting access and exit.

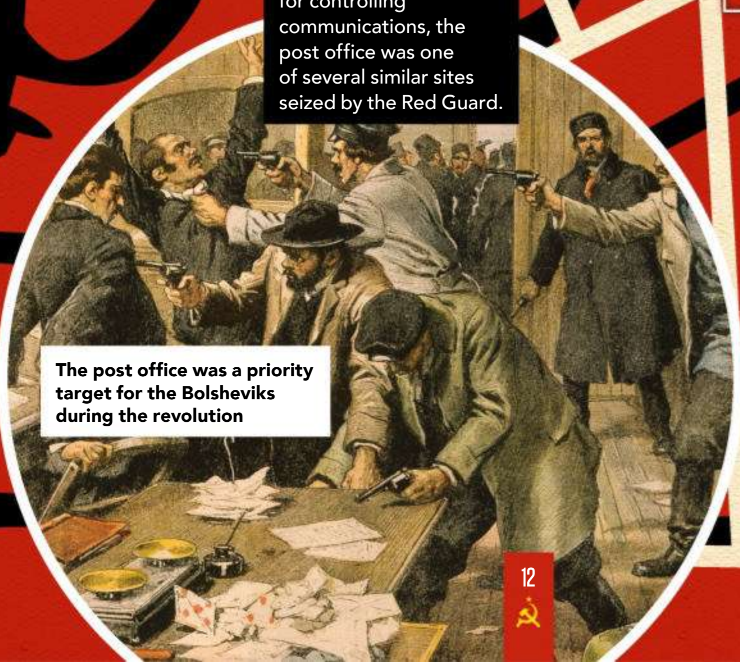
WINTER PALACE
The final site to fall in the October Revolution. The storming of the Winter Palace became the abiding image of the Bolshevik victory.

AURORA
Anchored on Saint Petersburg's Bolshaya Neva River, the cruiser *Aurora* was the ship from which the revolutionary troops fired blank shots at the Winter Palace, terrorising the people barricaded inside.

CENTRAL TELEGRAPH
Like the post office, control of the Central Telegraph was of significant use to the Bolsheviks and the Red Guard, cutting off the opposition from any means of summoning help or reinforcement.

MAIN POST OFFICE
A key point for controlling communications, the post office was one of several similar sites seized by the Red Guard.

MARIINSKY PALACE
The home of Nicholas II's State Council of Imperial Russia, State Chancellory and Soviet of Ministers, the palace was given over to the Provisional Government in March 1917 and then to various Soviet ministries after October.



The post office was a priority target for the Bolsheviks during the revolution

regiment, which caused several other regiments to find their soldiers mutinying in protest. The next day, Saint Petersburg fell to the insurgents, with the authorities retreating to the Winter Palace and the Duma in chaos.

Tsar Nicholas, long the lightening rod for the people's dissatisfaction – it didn't help that his household had come under the malign influence of notorious monk Rasputin while Nicholas had been commanding Russian forces in World War I – abdicated, ending the Romanov dynasty with extraordinary suddenness. Russia unanimously rejoiced, and in the civil conflicts that followed no party or faction even suggested the monarchy's revival. "The country had so radically vomited up the monarchy that it could not ever crawl down the people's throat again," wrote Leon Trotsky.

The celebrations were short-lived. A Provisional Government was formed, but while the very word 'provisional' was intended to make clear its temporary nature, it struggled to keep order, not least because, having not been elected, the people were resistant to the idea that it wielded any authority. It also continued to keep Russia fighting in World War I, which obviously remained an unpopular policy at home. Elections were promised for September and then postponed until November, but before they could happen the Bolsheviks seized power.

Despite his devotion to his homeland and his passion for its political struggles, Lenin had actually spent the bulk of the previous two decades away from Russia. Exiled to Siberia for three years in 1897, afterwards he spent itinerant periods in Munich, London, Paris, Sweden, Switzerland and Finland, among other places, all the time keeping a close eye on events at home and maintaining correspondence with his revolutionary comrades all over Europe. The unrest in February 1917 made him desperate to return to Russia from his base in Switzerland, but the fact that World War I was raging around him made that journey problematic. Various adventurous routes were discussed, but the eventual solution was an ad-hoc exchange of Russian exiles for Austro-Hungarian prisoners of war. The Russian Provisional Government dragged their heels over the deal, presumably not sure they wanted Lenin back at all, so the impatient communists did the deal with Germany themselves. Lenin arrived to a triumphant reception at the Finland Station in Saint Petersburg in April 1917.

For Lenin, the timing was urgent. Over the next six months he deluged his Bolshevik Central Committee colleagues with arguments in favour of radical immediate action, and in October the decision to seize power was made, with an alliance of Lenin and former Menshevik

VYBORG DISTRICT
NEVA

TAURIDE PALACE
The home of the Petrograd Soviet (the City Council of Saint Petersburg, which was called Petrograd until 1924). The Soviet was established after the February Revolution as a rival power to the Provisional Government. Several of its members – including Trotsky – were instrumental during the October Revolution.

HOTEL ASTORIA
Hand-to-hand fighting between the Tsarists and the Bolsheviks outside the Hotel Astoria was so intense that the pavements bore bloodstains the next day. Several of the revolutionary leadership took up residence there, and Lenin gave a famous address from its balcony in 1919.

SMOLNY
As Lenin's base in Saint Petersburg during October 1917, this is where the leader and his government worked. Lenin also lived here with his wife until the seat of power was moved to the capital city, Moscow, in 1918.

RAILWAY LINES/STATIONS
Yet another strategic target for the Red Guard, seizing the rail lines placed transport and stations under revolutionary control. Part of the Saint Petersburg to Hiitola line was blown up a year later in 1918 by Finnish troops to prevent supplies reaching their Soviet enemies.

Lenin masterminded the October Revolution from the Smolny Institute

SOVIET DECREES

In the seven years following the revolution in 1917, the new government issued dozens of legislative acts. They were known as decrees

DECREE ON PEACE

The document proposing the immediate withdrawal of Russia from World War I, a key Bolshevik policy since before the revolution.

DECREE ON LAND

Again, a central Bolshevik policy made law: private property was to be abolished and landed estates redistributed among the peasantry.

DECREE SOCIALIST HOMELAND IS IN DANGER!

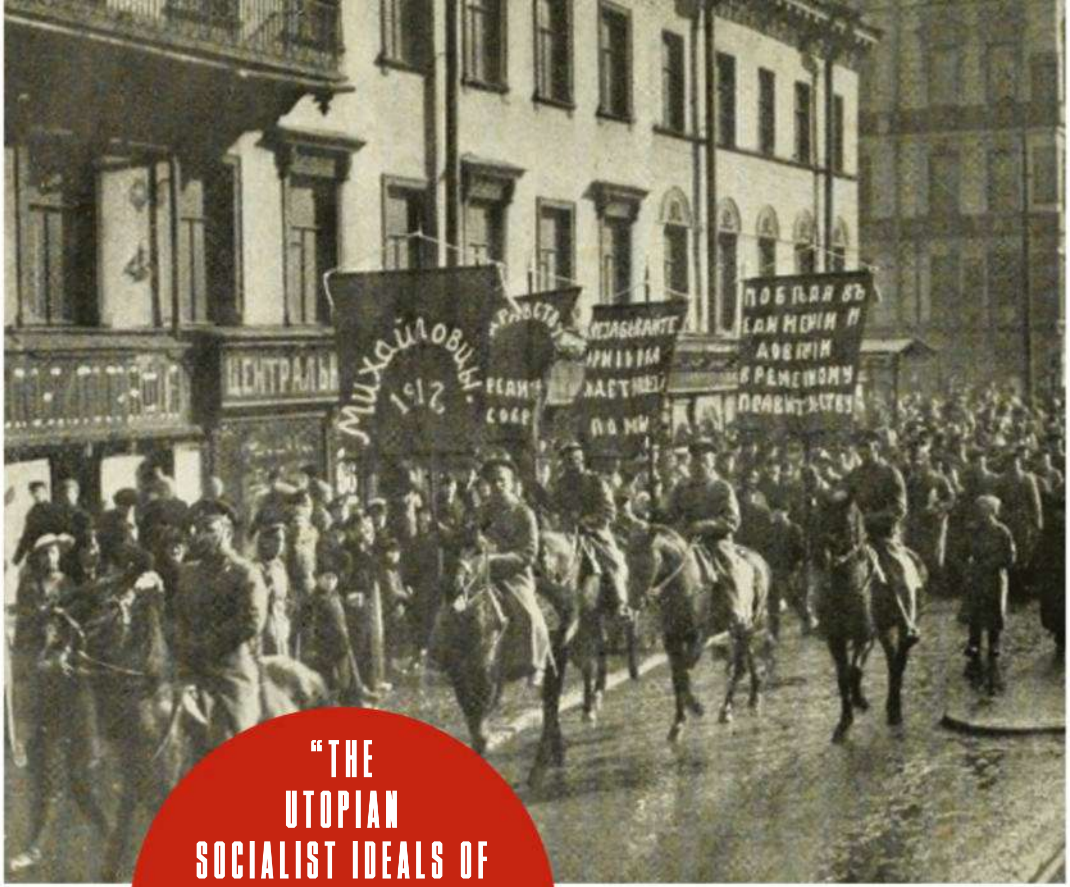
A call for peasant forces to mobilise in Russia's defence in the face of German advances. "Protect each position to the last drop of blood!" was the cry.

DECREE ON THE RED TERROR

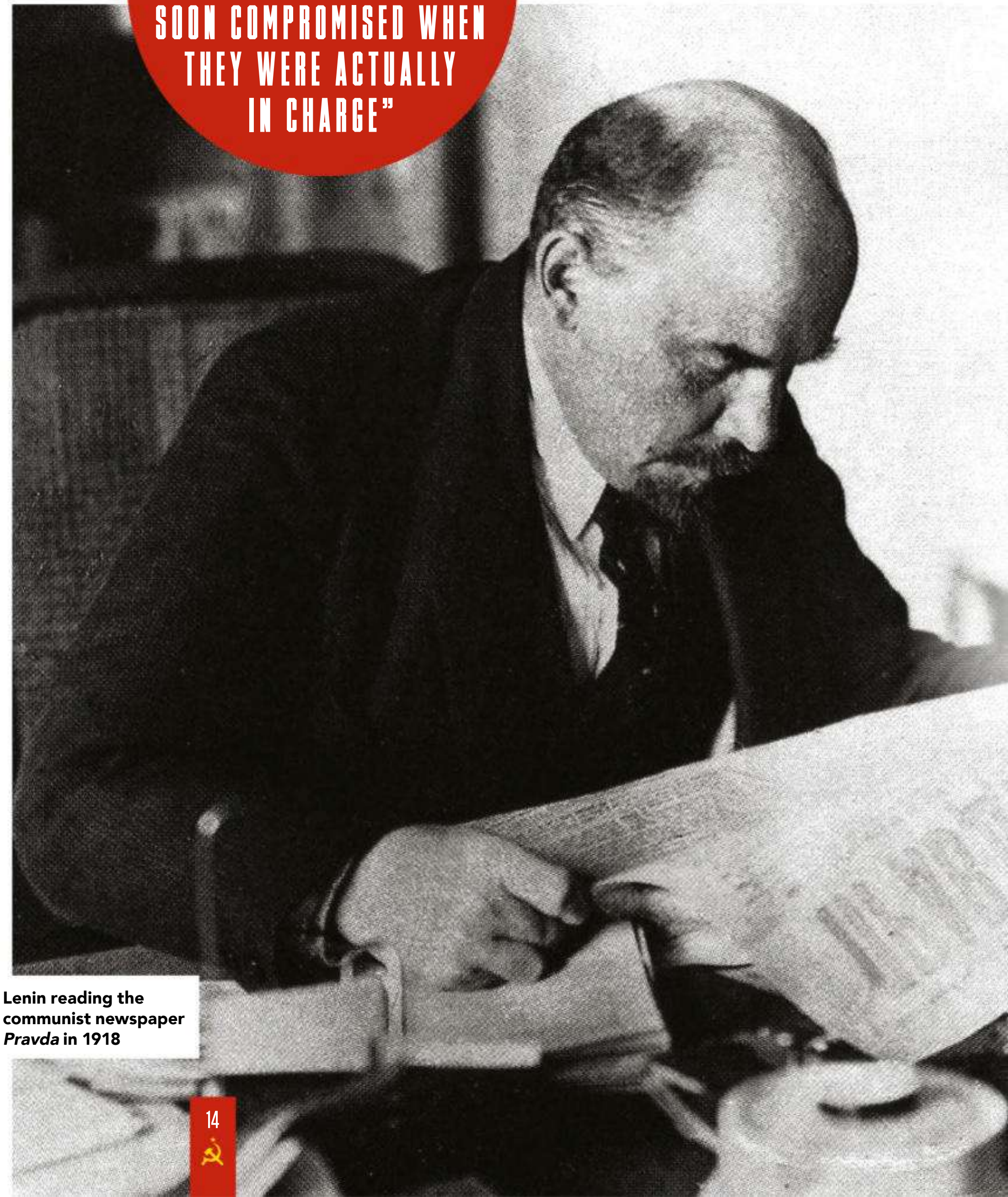
An appeal for workers to crush any signs of counter-revolution against the Bolsheviks. "Anyone who dares to spread the slightest rumour against the Soviet regime will be arrested immediately…"

DECREE ON THE INTRODUCTION OF TIME MEASUREMENT ACCORDING TO INTERNATIONAL TIME ZONE SYSTEM

Russia changed from the 'Old Style' Julian Calendar to the 'New Style' Gregorian system used by much of the rest of the world in 1918. There's a few days' difference, meaning the October Revolution actually took place in November.



> "THE UTOPIAN SOCIALIST IDEALS OF THE BOLSHEVIKS WERE SOON COMPROMISED WHEN THEY WERE ACTUALLY IN CHARGE"

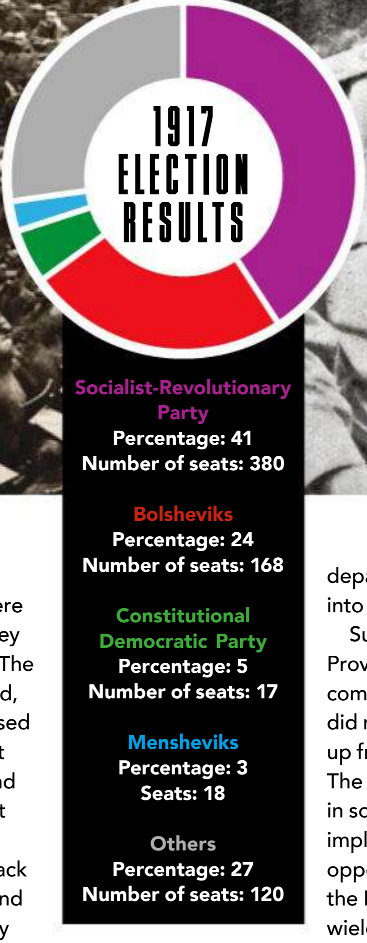


Lenin reading the communist newspaper *Pravda* in 1918

Совѣтъ Солдатскихъ Депутатовъ въ Государствен

A session of the Petrograd Soviet in 1917

Nicholas II, not long after his abdication in 1917



1917 ELECTION RESULTS

Socialist-Revolutionary Party
Percentage: 41
Number of seats: 380

Bolsheviks
Percentage: 24
Number of seats: 168

Constitutional Democratic Party
Percentage: 5
Number of seats: 17

Mensheviks
Percentage: 3
Seats: 18

Others
Percentage: 27
Number of seats: 120

Trotsky, now the chairman of the predominantly Bolshevik Petrograd Soviet (meaning 'council'), at its vanguard. The Bolshevik takeover had begun.

When the Provisional Government, led by the moderate socialist Alexander Kerensky, ordered the shutting down of the Bolshevik printing presses as a prelude to an attack on the Petrograd Military Revolutionary Committee, the Bolsheviks' armed bands of proletariat workers, known as the Red Guard, retaliated by storming strategic points such as bridges, railway stations, telephone exchanges, post offices, the national bank and the Tauride Palace. Kerensky fled, having been unable to muster enough troops to counter the Bolsheviks. By the morning, the only site that hadn't fallen was the Winter Palace, the headquarters of the Provisional Government.

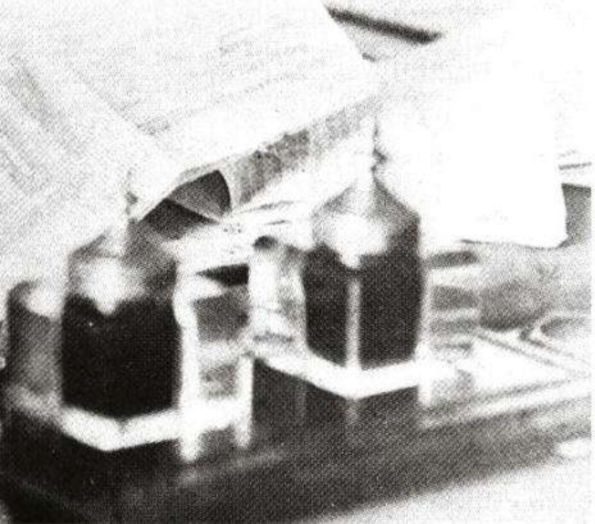
The 'Storming of the Winter Palace' has gone down as a famously dramatic moment in history, but it was actually a much more scrappy affair than portrayals like Sergei Eisenstein's classic film *October: Ten Days that Shook the World* have suggested. The revolutionary military had planned to begin the assault using heavy artillery from the nearby Peter and Paul Fortress, but the weapons there were rusty from disuse and wouldn't function. Soldiers brought up replacement cannon from elsewhere in the fortress but then realised they didn't have the right shells to fire. The signal to attack, it had been agreed, would come from a red lantern raised on a flagpole, but during the event a red lantern couldn't be found, and the soldier sent to look for one got lost in the dark and fell into a bog. The lamp he eventually brought back couldn't be attached to the pole and wasn't red. Nobody that eventually participated in the attack even saw it. The chaos dragged the Winter Palace's downfall out to a tortuous 15 hours, when a more organised force could probably have achieved it in far less time.

Luckily for the Bolshevik forces, the defence from within the Winter Palace was practically non-existent. The ministers inside were inexperienced in military matters, and the small number of troops defending them were becoming increasingly nervous the longer they waited for the Bolsheviks to breach the doors. Ammunition and food supplies for even a single evening were desperately low, and when the Bolsheviks began firing blank shots at the palace from the cruiser Aurora anchored on the Bolshaya Neva River, the soldiers mostly panicked and fled. Lenin appeared in public for the first time in months to proclaim that the Provisional Government had been overthrown and that the time had finally come to "set about building a proletarian socialist state". The Bolshevik position was strengthened even further when the Mensheviks and the Social Revolutionaries walked out of the resultant talks, leaving Lenin and his comrades basically unopposed. "You are miserable bankrupts. You have played out your role," Trotsky said to those departing. "Go where you belong, into the dustbin of history."

Such had been the state of the Provisional Government that, as one commentator put it, the Bolsheviks did not so much seize power as pick it up from where it had been dropped. The revolution has been called a coup in some circles, but the word 'coup' implies taking power from a strong opponent, where the power that the Provisional Government actually wielded was debatable. Essentially, there had been nobody actually 'running' Russia since the abdication of the Tsar.

Sadly, however, the utopian socialist ideals of the Bolsheviks were soon compromised when they were actually in charge, with Lenin forced into compromises like the crippling Brest-Litovsk peace treaty with Germany, which cost Russia several of its provinces and deprived it of vast swathes of its agricultural and industrial resources.

The Bolshevik ideology proved largely unworkable simply due to the practicalities of governance. Lenin ended up replacing one monolithic state with another, overruling the 'free' elections of November 1917 (in which the Socialist Revolutionary Party won a significant majority of the votes) and announcing "the Dictatorship of the Proletariat" so that the Bolsheviks walked away with power anyway. Factional splits and civil war followed, as did the continuing oppression of the proletariat that Bolshevism had sought to liberate, the catastrophic famine of the 1930s and the horrific regime of the former Bolshevik Joseph Stalin. The ideas that had led to the revolution had been, and for many are still, inspirational. The tragedy remains that the revolutionaries failed to live up to their own ideology.



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THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO

A key pillar of communist and socialist parties in the 19th century, the *Communist Manifesto* inspired revolutionaries across the globe

WRITTEN BY BEE GINGER

The *Communist Manifesto* was a political pamphlet published in London by the Communist League (a group of German-born revolutionary socialists) in February 1848. Given its vaunting ambitions, it opened in a fittingly dramatic way: "A spectre is haunting Europe – the spectre of communism."

The *Manifesto* was a joint development of ideas between Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, but the final draft was written by Marx alone in January 1848 in Brussels. He followed a template that Engels had previously written for the League of the Just (which Marx and Engels were asked to join and which they renamed The Communist League). Its text became a significant influence politically on the German public and led to Marx being banished from the country.

Although many of the ideas in the *Communist Manifesto* were not new, the work was sent to London and adopted by the League as the group's manifesto. It argued that the exploitation of one class by another is the motivating force behind every development in history. In the publication, Marx predicted an imminent revolution in Europe, and soon after its release revolution indeed broke out in France over the banning of political meetings that were being held by opposition and socialist groups. King Louis Philippe I was forced to abdicate following isolated riots leading to popular revolt, and it wasn't long before the revolution spread across Europe like wildfire. Marx, who was in Paris at the time, was banished by the Belgian Government, which was fearful that Belgium too would soon be engulfed.

Despite the original publication in German having little immediate impact, its ideas reverberated into the next century, and by the 1950s almost half of the world's population lived under Marxist rulership. The *Manifesto* would serve as a political rallying cry for the communist movement throughout Europe.

Written in four parts, the document begins by pointing out that the European bourgeoisie had identified communism as a threat with the potential to change both the economic system and power structure known as capitalism.

Part one of the document explained the evolution of capitalism and the class structure that it created; a new class system comprised of wage workers (the proletariat) and the owners of means of production (the bourgeoisie).

Marx and Engels highlighted that world views and the interests of the powerful and wealthy minority are reflected by the state and not the views of the proletariat, who make up the majority of society. They went on to discuss the exploitative reality faced by workers forced to compete for work and sell their labour to the bourgeoisie. In their view, workers soon become expendable as they are easily replaced. However, the *Manifesto*'s authors realised the flaw in this approach: "What the bourgeoisie therefore produces, above all, are its own gravediggers. Its [the system's] fall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable."

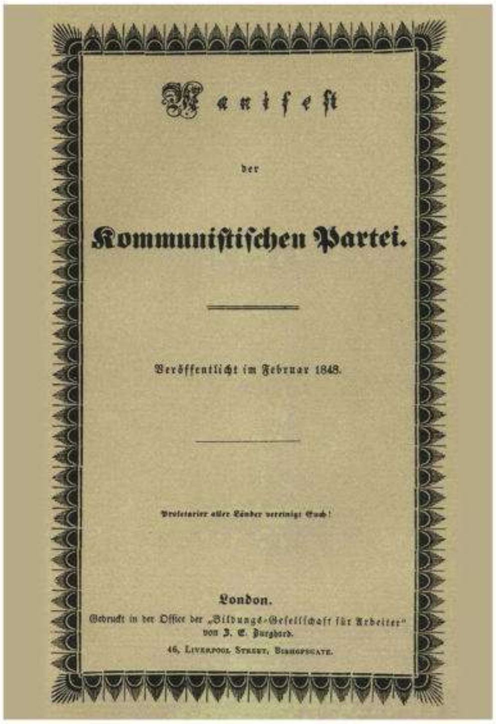
The communist movement sought to represent the interests of the proletariat and aimed to unify workers into a class with the same interests and redistribute political power by overturning the rule of the bourgeoisie. Marx and Engels set out ten goals they hoped to implement, including the abolition of private property and the introduction of free education for all children in public schools.

Part three focused on a vision of what could be, with an end goal of creating separate new societies rather than reforming existing ones, a dream that would be achieved through a collective struggle by the proletariat.

The fourth and final part expressed support for all revolutionary movements that challenged the existing political and social orders of the time. Summoning the working class to stand as one, Marx closed with a call to arms: "The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Workers of the world unite!"

Since the late 19th century, the *Communist Manifesto* (which has been revised and republished numerous times) has been read widely around the world and remains the foundation for critics of capitalism. It has proven to be the inspiration for many economic, social and political systems that are now organised by democracy and equality rather than the exploitation of the masses.

THE 10 POINTS OF COMMUNISM


Manifeſt

der

Kommuniſtiſchen Partei.

Veröffentlicht im Februar 1848.

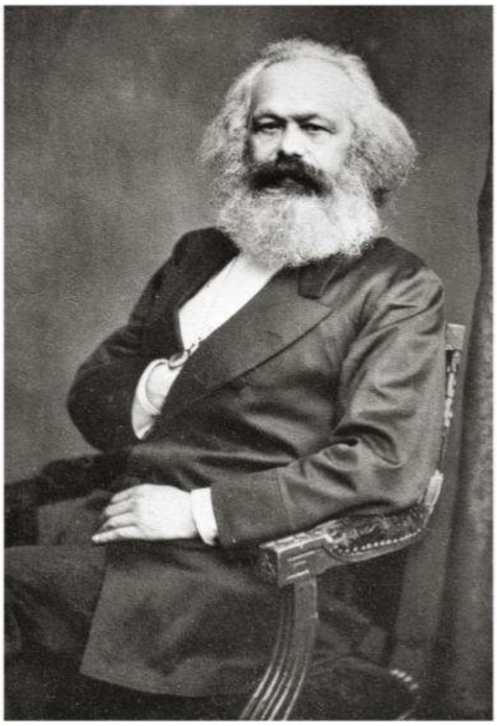
Proletarier aller Länder vereinigt Euch!

London.
Gedruckt in der Office der „Bildungs-Geſellſchaft für Arbeiter"
von J. E. Burghard.
46, Liverpool Street, Bishopsgate.

Eliminate private land ownership and rent as applied to public property.

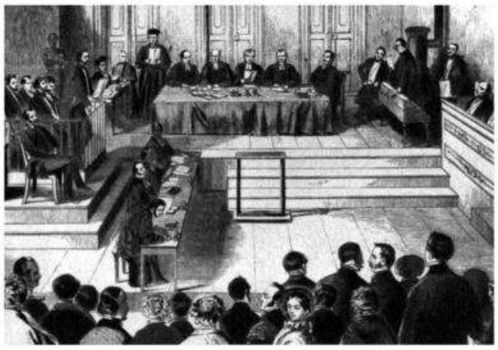
Institute a heavy progressive or graduated income tax.

Abolish the right of inheritance.



Confiscate all properties owned by emigrants and rebels.

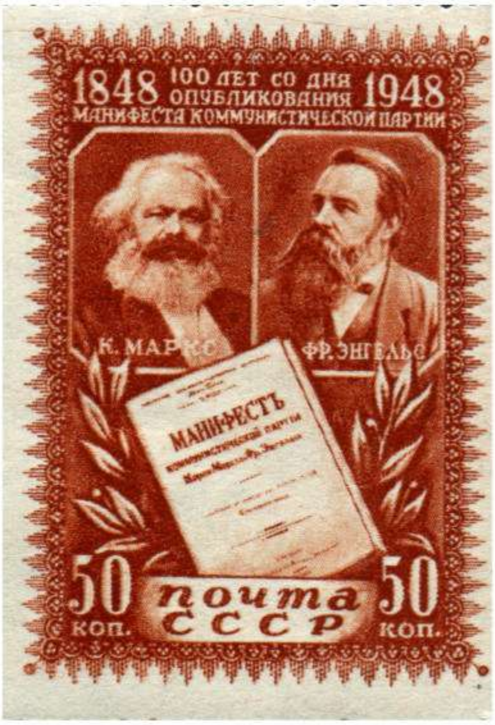
Establish a national bank where all money and loans are owned by the federal government and constitute a monopoly.



Nationally centralise the control of communication and transportation by the federal government.

Place ownership of factories and "instruments of production" in the hands of the federal government, cultivate the wastelands and improve the soil thereof according to a formed plan.

Everyone will be liable to work and labour. Industrial and agricultural armies will be formed, especially in agriculture.


1848 100 лет со дня опубликования 1948
манифеста коммунистической партии
К. МАРКС
ФР. ЭНГЕЛЬС
МАНИФЕСТЪ
50 коп.
почта СССР
50 коп.

Combine agriculture and manufacturing, eliminate the sovereignty of town/state and federal government by distributing the population more evenly over the face of the country.

Free public education for all children, the elimination of children performing factory work, and combine education and manufacturing.

Lenin and Trotsky (central and standing) photographed in 1921

“WHILE THEY ARGUED, A REVOLUTION STARTED WITHOUT THEM IN 1905 AS RUSSIAN WORKERS DEMONSTRATING AT SAINT PETERSBURG’S WINTER PALACE WERE SHOT”

THE REVOLUTION’S RIGHT-HAND MAN

Considered Lenin’s intellectual superior by some, Leon Trotsky was pivotal to the revolution’s success. Nevertheless, his fate was to be exile and death

The pen in Lev Davidovich Bronstein’s hand hovered above the paper. He needed to write a name on the travel permit, but as he was trying to escape exile for revolutionary activities, using his own name would be suicide. Randomly, he thought about a jailer who had guarded him in an Odessa prison prior to his exile. He scribbled the jailer’s name. He had no inkling it would stick, that it would follow him forever more. The first name he put down was Leon, a variation of Lev. For the surname he wrote Trotsky.

Some 22 years earlier, in November 1879, the Russian-Jewish Bronstein family’s fifth child had entered the world in southern Ukraine. Aged eight, he was dispatched to relatives in Odessa to attend school. The bustling city was a stark contrast to his rural home and he thrived educationally and culturally. To complete his schooling and prepare for university he moved to Nikolayev. There he was introduced to Marxism.

A growing political awareness was fuelled when he met Franz Shvigovsky, a Czech intellectual who held informal gatherings at his home where radical ideas were discussed. Bronstein began to devour serious and wide-ranging political literature. One of the group, a young woman named Alexandra Sokolovskaya, championed the emerging theories of Karl Marx, and Bronstein later began to view Marxism as a viable means for change.

Dismaying his father, Bronstein abandoned thoughts of university and enthusiastically began to undermine the tsarist regime. Working with Sokolovskaya and others, he formed the South Russian Workers’ Union, which agitated for better wages and conditions in local industries, when he was just a teenager. He wrote tracts and pamphlets to recruit members, but the group was naïve about informers. The founders were arrested for revolutionary activity in January 1898.

Following months of isolation in different prisons, Bronstein was transferred to a jail in Odessa, where he could at least read and broaden his knowledge of Marxism. Almost two years later, he was sentenced without trial to four years' exile in Siberia along with Sokolovskaya. A spell in a transit prison in Moscow followed, where he first heard about Lenin, and he married Sokolovskaya.

In Siberia, they were billeted in a village called Ust-Kot. It was a desolate place, feverishly hot in summer and many degrees below zero in winter. As such, and given its vast distance from the main Russian population centres, the tsarist regime committed few resources to suppressing revolutionary discussion. All manner of exiled dissidents travelled along the river to meet, debate and distribute smuggled pamphlets and literature. Eventually, Lenin's publication *What is to be Done?*, and issues of *Iskra*, a Marxist newspaper, reached the village.

Bronstein himself had begun writing for an Irkutsk newspaper, *Vostochnoe Obozrenie* (*Eastern Review*). He was quickly recognised as a talented contributor of well-crafted prose, ironic and sarcastic by turns, subtly including political commentary. He had formed the view that a centralised party was needed to coordinate revolutionary activity, and when he read that Lenin was advocating something similar he resolved to join him.

As someone who found sentimentality abhorrent, and claiming in any case that his wife encouraged him to leave, Trotsky, as he had now become, had no hesitation in abandoning her and their two young daughters to scurry west. He reached London and began to write for *Iskra*.

Trotsky was developing into an intellectual powerhouse and was never afraid to show it, even disagreeing with Lenin. He supported the Menshevik view of a democratic road to socialism against Lenin's standpoint that a controlling elite of dedicated revolutionaries should retain authority.

While they argued, a revolution started without them in 1905 as Russian workers demonstrating at Saint Petersburg's Winter Palace were shot dead. A general strike ensued and the crew of the battleship *Potemkin* mutinied. Trotsky, by then married to his second wife, Natalia Sedova, hurried home. Impressing with his energy and intellect, he quickly rose to prominence in the Saint Petersburg Soviet, or workers' council, demanding radical reforms. But the Tsar's concessions to the people, like the creation of the Duma, weakened the opposition's resolve and the revolt was suppressed. Trotsky was arrested, tried and given a second Siberian exile.

There he wrote *Results and Prospects*, outlining his theory of permanent revolution, before once again escaping west. For income, Trotsky returned to journalism, expertly covering the Yugoslav Wars of 1912–13 as a war correspondent. Like Lenin, he opposed WWI, but this led to his expulsion from several European countries. As 1917 dawned, he found himself in New York.

Within months, Tsar Nicholas II had abdicated, and Trotsky viewed the turmoil as the beginning of his predicted permanent revolution. He was back in Saint Petersburg, now called Petrograd, by mid-May, and his differences with Lenin were narrowing. The Bolsheviks had at first supported the Provisional Government that took power after the abdication. But in his *April Theses*, Lenin argued that his party should end that support and break with the Mensheviks to stop Russia's participation in the war and reorganise the country along socialist principles. Previously a Menshevik, Trotsky drifted from the faction because of its war position. He joined Lenin in July.

They were a formidable alliance: Lenin in the background, guiding, planning and organising; Trotsky visible and energetic, rallying and rousing support from workers, soldiers and sailors with fiery oratory. Once Lenin resurfaced and prompted the Bolsheviks to seize power, Trotsky swiftly became commissar for foreign affairs.

As such, seeking the promised end of war, an armistice with Germany was arranged to allow peace talks. To encourage the expected revolutions elsewhere in Europe, Trotsky released details of secret treaties agreed by the tsarist regime with Britain and France, revealing how a defeated Germany would be divided between them. Yet no further uprisings occurred, and though he used stalling tactics during the negotiations, Germany lost patience and threatened Petrograd. This led to the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, which brought peace but surrendered key lands to the aggressors.

Few believed Germany would actually adhere to the treaty, while Lenin's Russia faced civil war from counter-revolutionary forces. A Red Army was needed to defend what had been gained and Trotsky was tasked with creating it, now becoming people's commissar for military affairs. He instigated mass conscription to provide immense manpower and recruited legions of former tsarist officers for leadership. He demanded extreme discipline to counter cowardice and desertions, assessing front lines and boosting morale by travelling thousands of miles aboard his armoured train. The opposition White Army was defeated and the civil war won.

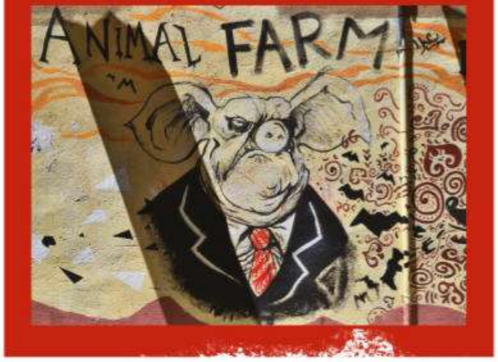
Unofficially Lenin's deputy in what had been renamed the Communist Party, Trotsky never courted support from members, often browbeating those who disagreed with him. This intellectual arrogance worked against him when Lenin fell ill in the early 1920s. By contrast, Joseph Stalin, as secretary, had placed supporters in prominent positions, building a power base. When Lenin died, Stalin's loyalists ensured that he, and not Trotsky, took the leadership.

BRONSTEIN TO TROTSKY TO SNOWBALL

Revolutionary Russia had a veritable farmyard of characters to inspire Orwell

In *Animal Farm*, George Orwell's 1945 allegorical account of the Russian Revolution and its subsequent totalitarian regime, pigs portray the key players. Old Major, a boar, is an amalgam of Marx and Lenin. Napoleon, a Berkshire pig, represents Stalin. Snowball, a commonly generic pink pig, reflects Trotsky's personality and history.

Orwell, a democratic socialist, had some sympathy with Old Major's vision, while the characterisation of Snowball as a rousing orator who fights determinedly during conflicts is quite positive when compared to other animals. Ultimately, Napoleon brands Snowball a traitor and banishes him from the farm, mirroring Trotsky's denunciation and exile. It was Orwell's deep mistrust of Stalin, originating in part when he fought alongside communists during the Spanish Civil War of 1936–1939, which prompted him to create the fable to highlight the corrupting nature of power.



Trotsky challenged Stalin on issues of party democracy and economic planning but was denounced as a factionist and opportunist. The writing was on the wall. Expulsion from the party was followed by yet another exile, then banishment from the country in 1929. A number of literary works followed, many highly critical of Stalin.

With war looming in Europe, Trotsky arrived in Mexico in 1937, staying with artists Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera. At the same time in Russia, orchestrated show trials accusing Trotsky of treason were taking place. Determined to silence his former comrade, Stalin sent agents to eliminate him. Ramón Mercader, a Spanish communist, was the man who succeeded in carrying out Stalin's orders, attacking Trotsky with an ice pick in August 1940. Trotsky fought valiantly for his life, but he succumbed to his injuries the following day. One of the revolution's heroes was no more.

© Getty Images

THE
RUSSIAN CIVIL WAR

Lenin won his revolution, but a civil war nearly cost him his new regime

WRITTEN BY **GREG KING**

On March 3 1918, Russia signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with Germany and the other Central Powers, ending Russian participation in WWI. Removing Russia from the war had long been one of Lenin's goals, but it came at a price. With the sweep of a pen, Russia lost a quarter of its population and a third of its territory. Ukraine, Finland, the Baltic Provinces, vast areas in the Caucasus, and Poland were handed over to Germany or declared independent.

Lenin had acted from political and military expediency: Russia was in no position to continue the war. The army, such as it was, had fallen apart as former Tsarist generals refused to fight for the Bolshevik cause. In an effort to counteract desertions and mutinies, Trotsky had formed a number of Red Army battalions loyal to Lenin, but they were poorly trained and unlikely to engage in sustained fighting. When German troops threatened to march on Petrograd, a worried government had hastily relocated to Moscow. To forestall disaster, Lenin had bowed to the inevitable and made peace.

Disgusted with these concessions, anti-Bolshevik forces began coalescing into military units, matched on the other side by Trotsky's special detachments. The Volunteer Army began sporadic fighting in the German-occupied Ukraine in the spring of 1918, and their victories soon spread to much of southern Russia and into the Caucasus. The most significant threat to Bolshevik rule, though, emerged accidentally. Czech prisoners of war, captured from the army of Austria-Hungary, had fought alongside the Russians throughout 1917. After the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, the Bolsheviks agreed to repatriate the 30,000 soldiers via Vladivostok at the eastern edge of Siberia. But in May 1918, Trotsky ordered their arrest and disarmament, causing the Czech forces in Siberia to rebel. Soon they had joined forces with other anti-Bolshevik troops and the Russian Civil War began.

The Czechs, troops of the Volunteer Army, former Tsarist officers and soldiers, Cossacks, conservatives, members of the middle class and others opposed to the Bolsheviks coalesced to form the White Army, which was led by generals Nikolai Yudenich and Anton Denikin and Admiral

> "FOREIGN INTERVENTION POSED A SERIOUS THREAT TO LENIN'S STRUGGLING REGIME"

Alexander Kolchak. Though its disparate elements shared few goals, the White Army proved to be a powerful force: in the summer of 1918 it captured most of Siberia from the Bolsheviks and drove the Red Army into retreat. By autumn, the Bolsheviks had been chased out of Russia's Central Asian and Caucasus provinces, and large portions of the Volga region fell to the Whites as well.

The White Army established its own Russian Provisional Government, headquartered in the Siberian city of Omsk, which posed a serious threat to the survival of Lenin's new regime. As War Commissar, Trotsky instituted mandatory conscription into the Red Army, hoping to repel the anti-Bolshevik forces. Matters in Moscow grew tenuous that summer. The Western Allies worried that Russia's withdrawal from the war would free up German troops and prolong the conflict; the White Army promised to renounce the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk and continue the fight. It did not take long for the Allies to side with the anti-Bolshevik forces. In April of 1918, the first members of a British Expeditionary Force landed at Vladivostok, along with a number of Japanese marines; more British troops followed that summer, landing in Archangel and with their French and American counterparts in Murmansk. Numbering some 10,000 soldiers, they all joined up with the Whites hoping to drive the Bolsheviks from power and end the war.

This foreign intervention posed a serious threat to the continued existence of Lenin's struggling regime, but that late summer of 1918 witnessed even more troubling developments. In July, the Left Socialist Revolutionaries, who formed a substantial part of Lenin's uneasy coalition, abruptly quit the government and staged an abortive coup; a week later, former Tsar Nicholas II and his family were executed in Ekaterinburg by members of the Ural Regional Soviet. Despite the mythology, no evidence exists that Lenin ordered their deaths. Then, in August, a Socialist Revolutionary named Fanny Kaplan shot Lenin while he was giving a speech; although he recovered, he had been badly injured and would never regain his former strength.

Moscow responded in September, formally launching the Red Terror, meant to stamp out all counter-revolutionary activity. Over the next few years the Cheka arrested, tortured and killed thousands of suspected traitors. Terror and brutality soon became a way of life as Russia plunged further into civil war. Executions without trial, mass shootings, the punitive burning of villages and imprisonment as political and military tools were adopted by both sides.

The Red Army began racking up victories throughout the autumn; the eventual withdrawal of the Allied expeditionary forces over the next 14 months left the Whites depleted and disillusioned. In November, General Kolchak staged a coup and declared himself Supreme Ruler of Russia, but his men were losing ground in Siberia. Throughout 1919, battles were waged, but the Whites were losing men while Trotsky's forced conscription kept the ranks of the Red Army strong. In the south, Denikin's White Army and volunteer forces were driven from Kiev and the Volga region. By the summer of 1919, Bolshevik troops had been forced to retreat to the Crimean Peninsula and Denikin launched an offensive meant to retake Moscow. But the White losses in Siberia freed up Bolshevik troops who regularly began repulsing attacks. Poorly armed, Denikin's army was forced into retreat as a resurgent Red Army swept across southern Russia, recapturing city after city.

In October 1919, General Yudenich launched an assault on Petrograd that very nearly took the former capital; only quick thinking by Trotsky, who armed suburban residents and urged them to fight, saved the Bolsheviks from losing the city.

In November 1919, the Red Army captured Omsk, driving Admiral Kolchak even further east as the Whites lost their grip on Siberia. Two months later, Kolchak was arrested and then executed by the Bolsheviks. His replacement, General Nicholas Semenov, proved an ineffective leader, and by 1920 the Whites had all but been driven out of Siberia.

Denikin's army was gone, and now only forces led by General Peter Wrangel in the Crimea offered any anti-Bolshevik resistance. Though they fought valiantly they could not match the superior numbers and firepower of the Reds, and in November 1920 they evacuated Crimea.

There would be intermittent battles between White Army pockets and the Reds throughout 1921, but the civil war was essentially over. The conflict carried over into the short-lived Polish-Soviet War, but by that point in time, Lenin's Red Army was exhausted and he had no choice but to sign the Treaty of Riga on 18 March 1921, which established a Polish-Soviet border and saw millions of Ukrainians and Belarusians absorbed into the Second Polish Republic.

No one knows precisely how many people perished in the Civil War. Estimates ran as high as 12 million casualties, the majority of them civilians who were killed both in the military conflicts as well as in the punitive Red Terror and its White counterpart.

Perhaps as deadly were the effects of Lenin's system of war communism, which saw all industry nationalised and all surplus food and grain produced by peasants commandeered for use by the Red Army. The result was widespread famine across Russia, a situation exacerbated by severe droughts in many agricultural areas. Up to 5 million Russians are believed to have died of starvation in 1921, even as the civil war approached its end.

Freed at last from internal military threats, Lenin now faced the seemingly overwhelming task of rebuilding Russia and consolidating Bolshevik power. Widespread dissatisfaction with economic conditions threatened the survival of the state. To save the situation, Lenin introduced his New Economic Policy in the spring of 1921. The policy was something of a retreat from his core Marxist principles, though. It allowed for the creation of a limited free market system based on capitalist ideas, although one that was still subject to state control.

The only goal that was remaining was the consolidation of power. In April 1922, the Tenth

Clockwise from top: Lenin, with his wife and sister; Red Army volunteers; civil war victims

© Wiki. Pyotr Novitsky (1885-1942) Blue pencil.svg wikidata:Q30101297

Party Congress met in Moscow. Lenin now demanded that all political factions except for the Communist Party be banned, with the warning that they could be "harmful" and often promoted rebellions. The Congress agreed, and Russia formally became a single-party state.

Later on that year delegates from all of the varied Soviet Socialist Republics gathered in Moscow. There was but one item on the agenda: to achieve his final goal, Lenin wanted the country to be united. With all political opposition now outlawed, the outcome was assured and the event ended with the creation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Lenin had lived to see his long-dreamed-of revolution come to pass, though victory had been won at the cost of millions of lives (estimates place the war's total death toll at approximately 10 million, with the majority of casualties being civilians). Lenin now stood at the head of an immense communist state, but ironically his influence was on the wane. He never recovered from the wounds he had received during the assassination attempt in 1918, and in the absence of his leadership a new figure had begun to rise through the ranks: Joseph Stalin. Lenin was wary of this enigmatic man from Georgia, but by now he was powerless to stop him.

On 21 January 1924, Lenin died at the age of 53, leaving a tangled legacy of achievement and repression that would reverberate throughout the 20th century. His ruthless replacement would turn the state Lenin built into a mighty leviathan.

ADMIRAL KOLCHAK

Kolchak led the anti-Bolshevik White Army in Siberia before a so-called ally cruelly betrayed him

A former decorated Tsarist naval officer, Admiral Alexander Kolchak was vehemently anti-communist and led the White Army in Siberia during the Russian Civil War. Kolchak was a popular figurehead in the White movement, but as a military commander he proved largely unable to meet the rolling challenges of the fight against the Red Army, having no practical military experience on land. White Army victories in Siberia under his leadership were often accidental or came at the impetus of other leaders.

Kolchak also proved to be a divisive figure: he refused to work with ethnic minorities, harboured the anti-Semitic prejudices common to many in Russia and believed in an almost autocratic use of power. Yet he remained a commanding presence. In November 1918, a British-engineered coup overthrew the unpopular anti-Bolshevik regional government in Omsk in western Siberia and Kolchak was installed as supreme leader and commander-in-chief of the White Army. "My chief aims," Kolchak declared, "are the organisation of a fighting force, the overthrow of Bolshevism, and the establishment of law and order."

However, victories by the Red Army over the next year drove Kolchak east. In January 1920, he was betrayed by the head of the Allied military mission, Pierre Janin, who arrested him when he refused to hand Janin and the Czech soldiers control of the White Army's gold reserves. With a callous disregard for Kolchak's life, Janin handed him over to the Social Revolutionaries, themselves soon to be broken up by the Bolsheviks, who executed Kolchak by firing squad. According to witnesses, he remained calm in the moments before his death, asking the commander of the firing squad to send a message to his wife in Paris "to say that I bless my son".

RUSSIA'S ULTIMATE TYRANT

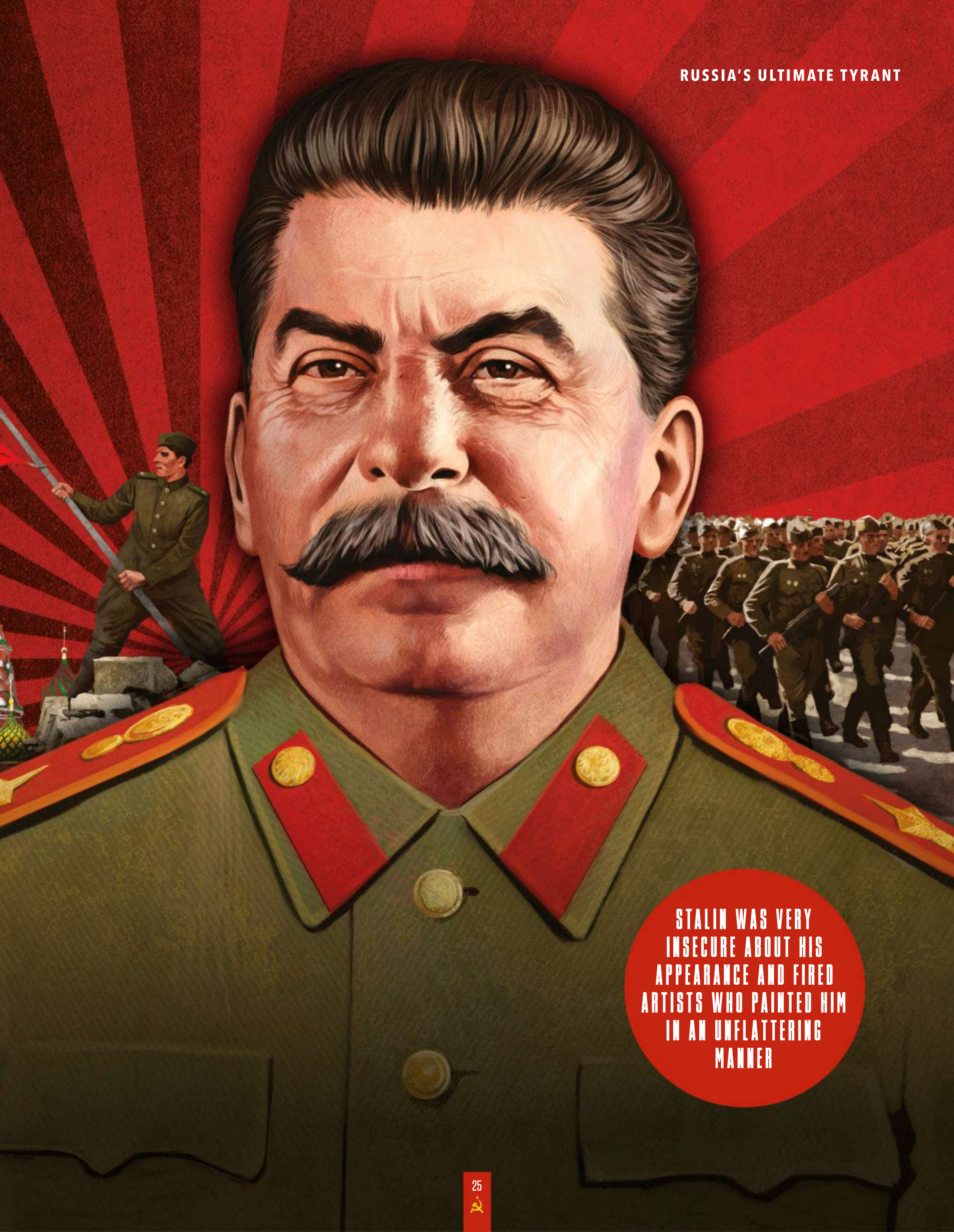
STALIN

Despised by many but idolised by his adoring public, Stalin dyed the Soviet Union red with one of the most brutal and bloody regimes in history

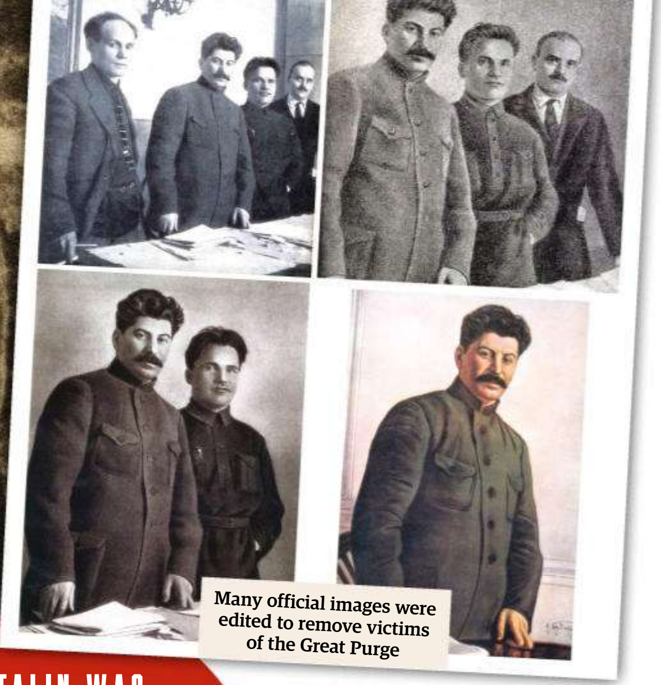
WRITTEN BY FRANCES WHITE

Born the son of a poor cobbler in an illiterate family, Iosif Dzhugashvili seemed an unlikely person to one day become the dictator of the juggernaut that was the Soviet Union. Young Iosif had been born at a time of massive change. In his lifetime, the Tsars, which had ruled Russia for countless generations, would be dethroned and slaughtered, giving this poor boy from Georgia the chance to claim ultimate power.

Stalin himself played little part in the famous revolution of October 1917, and it wasn't until the Russian Civil War of 1917 to 1921 that his commitment and organisation skills caught Lenin's attention and catapulted him through the ranks. After acquiring a taste of power, Stalin wanted more, and he aligned himself with the ailing Soviet leader. As Lenin's imminent death loomed, Stalin, who was now general secretary, used his tenacity and cunning to ensure everything was in place for his rapid rise to power. His opposition were ejected from the party and then the Soviet Union before eventually losing their lives. Obsessed with ensuring his rule remained unquestioned, Stalin purged the land of anyone who dared question his authority. Soon all who remained were the few who were fiercely loyal and the many who were terrified into obedience. Stalin's ruthlessness had won him the ultimate prize – the Soviet Union was his.



STALIN WAS VERY INSECURE ABOUT HIS APPEARANCE AND FIRED ARTISTS WHO PAINTED HIM IN AN UNFLATTERING MANNER



Many official images were edited to remove victims of the Great Purge

THE GREAT PURGE

It is a cold winter's night in 1937. A black van screeches to a halt on a dark and silent street. A small group of men emerge from the car, their sloping rimmed hats silhouetted against the dim light of the flickering streetlamps, their heavy guns swinging at their sides. One casually flicks open a notebook as another lights his pipe and takes a long drag. With a word and gesture to a nearby house, the group move as one. The ground crunches under their leather boots as they climb the steps and knock sharply on the door.

They pound their fists against the cracking wood. One flicks open the letterbox and screams harsh words through the small gap, and eventually the door opens and a pale face appears. One of the men kicks the door open and the group storm through the house, flinging open doors and destroying anything in their path. A moment later they emerge into the street again, dragging with them a terrified young man who clings to his father. The older man's face is pale but stern, his jaw clenched. His silence is louder than his son's panicked pleas.

The men continue their raid, storming through houses until eventually the entire street is full of men from 17 to 70, some dazed, others hysterical, and some with that same strange haunting silence. As the guards point their guns and usher them into the van there is no word of explanation and the few who protest are beaten. As the door closes and the vehicle disappears into the night, those who remain return silently to their homes.

These were not the first victims of the terror that would come to be known as the Great Purge, and they would not be the last. These armed raids in the dead of night were not the work of a secret terrorist organisation but the government itself, and there was no redemption or tearful reunion awaiting these victims, but only imprisonment, torture, forced confessions and execution.

Obtaining ultimate power was not enough for Stalin. Controlled by his incredible paranoia, suddenly everyone became a suspect in conspiring to overthrow his rule. The purge began when Sergei Kirov, a staunch Stalinist, was murdered in 1934. Stalin used his assassination as evidence that there was a plot against him and launched the operation. But it is thought by some that Stalin himself arranged the death of the well-liked politician whose popularity threatened his rule. This began the string of witch-hunts that went on to claim millions of innocent lives.

The purges first struck former senior Communist Party leaders in the famous Moscow Trials. These trials were covered by Western journalists, many of whom were deeply suspicious of the steady stream of supposedly willing confessions from prisoners accused of conspiring to assassinate Stalin. They were right to be: behind closed doors confessions were being beaten out of the accused through torture, threats against their families and assurances that their lives would be spared if they only pleaded guilty. Such promises were bold-faced lies; a confession was followed by execution.

The purge then extended to the army, writers, artists, 'wealthy' farmers and eventually anyone who could be rounded up to make up the numbers of the 'minimum arrests' needed by the NKVD, the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs. Headed by Nikolai Yezhov, the NKVD troika were vicious courts of three people who would issue sentences without a full trial. Through this they could achieve assembly line-style executions of up to 1,000 people per day. Eventually, the purge extended to the Communist Party itself, as almost all the Bolsheviks who had taken part in the 1917 revolution were destroyed, until the only original member left was Stalin.

From 1937 to 1938, some 1.2 million people met their death as a result of the purge. After his death, 357 lists were found bearing Stalin's own signature, authorising the executions of some 40,000 people. His calculated and cold approach to the millions of lives he destroyed so easily is starkly evident in something he reportedly muttered while reviewing one such list: "Who's going to remember all this riff-raff in ten or 20 years' time? No one. Who remembers the names now of the boyars Ivan the Terrible got rid of? No one."

STALIN WAS A FAN OF COWBOY FILMS AND HAD HIS OWN PRIVATE CINEMA WHERE HE HOSTED SCREENINGS

MOST WANTED

Three senior officials who found themselves on Stalin's hit list

LEON TROTSKY
Position: Head of the Fourth International
Crime: Firmly opposed to Stalin as the leader of the Soviet Union
Fate: Assassinated on Stalin's orders on 21 August 1940

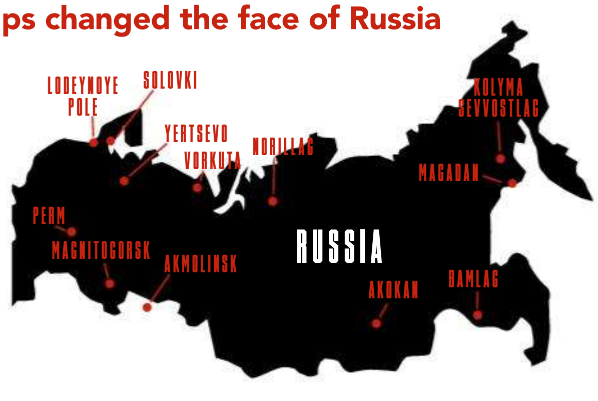
NIKOLAI YEZHOV
Position: Head of the NKVD
Crime: Theft of government funds, homosexuality, collaboration with German spies
Fate: Arrested & shot on 4 February 1940

NIKOLAI BUKHARIN
Position: General secretary of Comintern's executive committee
Crime: Conspiracy to overthrow the state
Fate: Arrested and executed on 15 March 1938

LENIN	V	STALIN
Lenin's vision was a society run by the people for the people, with all resources shared equally. He wished to eradicate the idea of bourgeoisie (a social order ruled by the wealthy) and believed the power of the state would eventually fade away.	COMMUNISM	He used communism to further his own power and believed Russia would thrive with a powerful leader controlling the masses. He wished to eliminate the bourgeoisie, as well as any resistance of the working class, using state violence to do so.
National borders were deemed outdated and Lenin believed the world should engage in a unified revolution. He wished to spread communism across the planet and envisioned a merger of all nations and the creation of a world state.	FOREIGN POLICY	An advocate of 'socialism in one country', Stalin believed the Soviet Union should focus on building communism in Soviet-controlled countries rather than encouraging a worldwide revolution that would be more difficult to control.
The New Economic Policy of 1921 allowed private individuals to own their own enterprises. This meant peasants could operate freely, keeping and trading their own produce. The idea of this was to encourage an independent economy.	ECONOMY	He wished to rapidly industrialise the economy and brought all agriculture under government control. Peasants were forced to live on group farms and there was seizure of grain hoards, land, machinery and livestock.
Lenin believed that all the oppressed people of the world had the right to self-determination, to rule themselves rather than submit to the will of the state. However, Lenin was also responsible for the Red Terror, where he ordered the executions of a host of his opponents.	THE PEOPLE	There were mass purges of anyone who dared to question Stalin's authority or engage in revolutionary behaviour. Stalin believed that political repression of the people was necessary in order to defend against the destruction of the Soviet Union.

GULAGS

From the empty frozen plains of Siberia to the towering concrete of central cities, the brutal Gulag camps changed the face of Russia



When the term 'Gulag' was coined, it was used to refer to a government agency in charge of the forced labour camps. But to many today the word Gulag is representative of the entire Soviet system of repression, unwarranted arrests, tortuous interrogations, complete disregard for human rights and millions of needless deaths.

The Gulag camps existed in a form before Stalin, though they did not bear that name. Known as 'corrective labour camps', the first was installed in 1918, but these early labour camps were very different to the ones Stalin would create. He transformed these camps, where previously the prisoners enjoyed relative freedom, into a widespread system of over 53 separate merciless camps and 423 labour colonies all across the Soviet Union from the 1930s to '50s. These camps would come to imprison 14 million people and claim the lives of at least 1.6 million of these unfortunates. The vast majority of the camps were in extremely remote, inhospitable regions of northeast Siberia. One of the locations for these camps, Kolyma, struck fear into the hearts of all Gulag prisoners. With a yearlong winter, Kolyma was an unforgiving, barren place, impossible to reach overland. And the camps there, like many other Siberian camps, did not bother with fences or fortification; to seek escape in the vast freezing plains was to sentence oneself to death. The Gulag camps were not like the infamous Nazi concentration camps, which were designed to kill their prisoners, but the horrific conditions often resulted in the same outcome. The Gulags were more numerous, housed more prisoners and lasted for many more years than the hellish Nazi camps.

The prisoners, of whom a great majority had been imprisoned without trial, would face relentless years of hard labour and minimal food. The more work they completed, the larger their ration of thin, tasteless soup, but as they were supplied with primitive, broken and useless tools, achieving the high labour expectations was nearly impossible. With depleting food rations and sometimes given only four hours' rest a day, the Gulag prisoners were worked to exhaustion and death. In the winter of 1941 alone, a quarter of the Gulags' population died of starvation. To Stalin the Gulags were essential. His purges were so fervent that any prisoner who died in the camps could instantly be replaced and the supply of cheap labour remained uninterrupted.

These prisoners played a key role in enabling the USSR to defeat the German invasion as they constructed essential railroads, produced ammunition and built tanks and other machines. New camps were created wherever an economic task required cheap labour, such as the Sea-Baltic Canal. The Gulag institution was finally closed in 1960, but many of the practices of these camps, such as forced labour and prisoner intimidation, continue to exist in Russian prisons to this day.

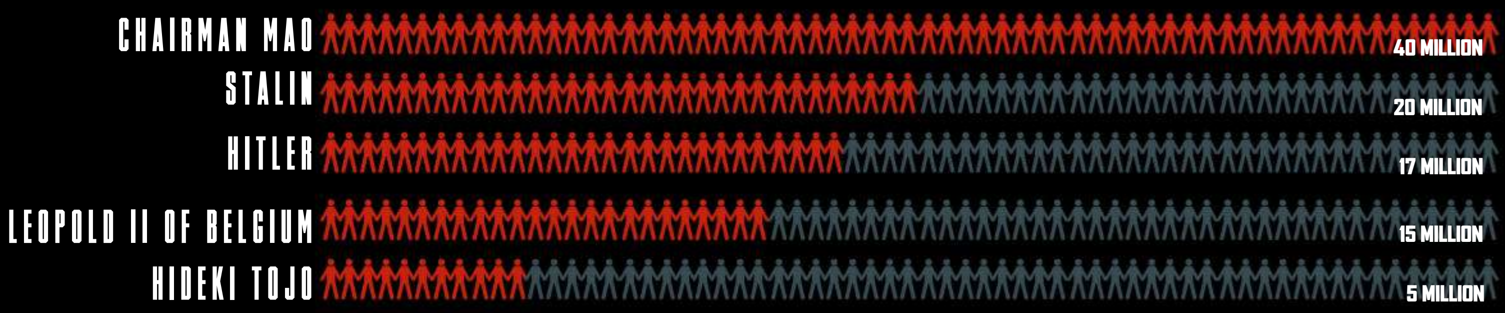
CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

Stalin's Russia wasn't the place to be caught – or even accused of – committing a crime

Late to work three times	The punishment for repeated offences of tardiness was to be sent to the Gulag for three years. There the offenders would face up to 14 hours a day of hard physical labour.
Telling a joke about a government official	You could face a punishment of up to 25 years in a Gulag camp for this crime. Ivan Burylov wrote the word 'comedy' on his 'secret' ballot paper and was sentenced to eight years.
Petty theft	The sentence for stealing state property – usually food – was ten years of hard labour in a Gulag. This would often be extended without explanation and the convicts forced to live in exile once released.
Conspiracy to prepare uprising	Those accused of political crimes usually became victims of the purge and were executed. Close friends and family members would also be hunted down and disposed of.
Working in Germany	Many citizens of the Baltic States were forced to work in Germany during WWII. They were later arrested for this 'crime' and sentenced to ten years of forced labour in a Gulag camp.
Practising Christianity	In the late 1920s there was a mass purge of Christian intellectuals and closure of churches. Anyone found practising the religion was arrested, sent to a Gulag camp or executed.

THE WORST DICTATOR?

Find out the estimated number of deaths that history's worst dictators are thought to have caused



THE COBBLER'S SON
Stalin is born as Iosif Dzhugashvili. He suffers from the smallpox disease, which permanently scars his face, and aged 12 his left arm is injured in an accident, leaving it shorter than the other. **18 December 1878**

Stalin in 1894, aged 16

LIFE IN THE PRIESTHOOD
Stalin attends Tiflis Theological Seminary after receiving a scholarship. During his training to join the priesthood he discovers the ideas of Marx and Engels. He is expelled after missing his final exams. **1894-1899**

POLITICAL LIFE BEGINS
Stalin learns that Lenin has formed the Bolsheviks, a political group that follows the teachings of Marx. He signs up and proves himself a skilled and capable organiser. He is arrested and exiled to Siberia but quickly escapes. **1903**

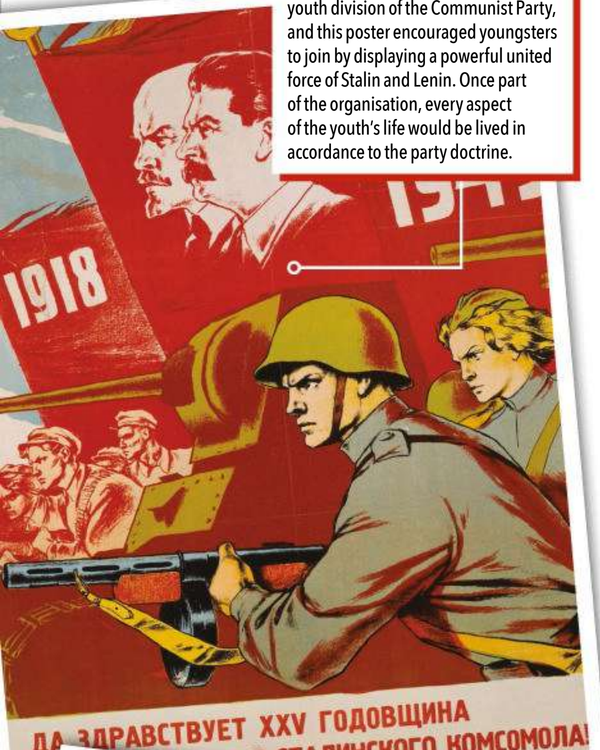
A TASTE OF POWER
As the Bolsheviks seize power, Stalin rises through the ranks and is appointed the people's commissar for nationality affairs. This position gives him his first taste of real power, and he uses it to burn villages and order executions. **1917**

THE STEADY RISE
Lenin appoints Stalin as general secretary. That year Lenin suffers from a stroke and his relationship with Stalin deteriorates. He insists that Stalin be removed from his position, but Stalin's network of allies prevents this. **1922**

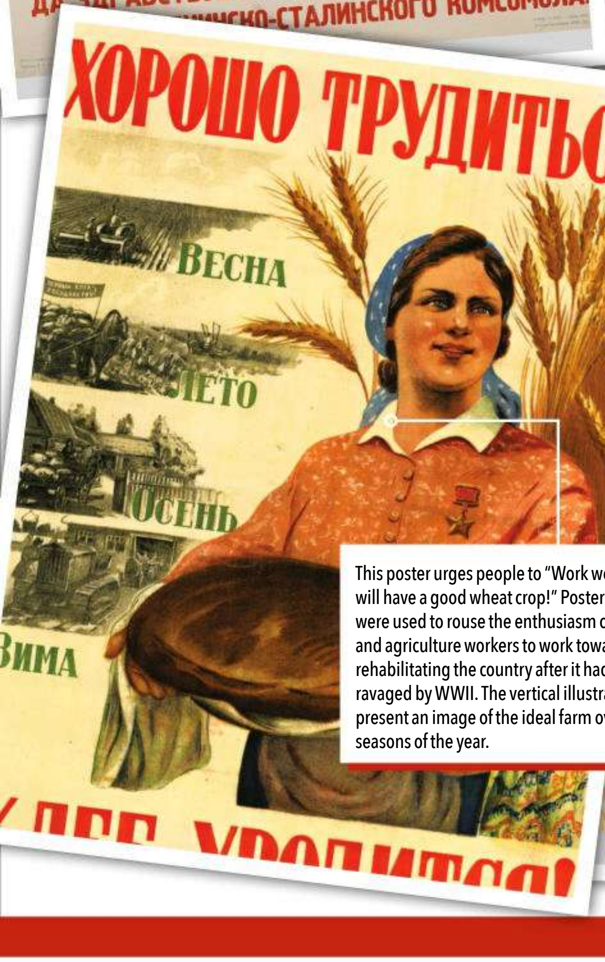
POWERFUL PROPAGANDA

Russia's 'man of steel' was a master at the art of propaganda, depicting and presenting himself as the hero of the nation

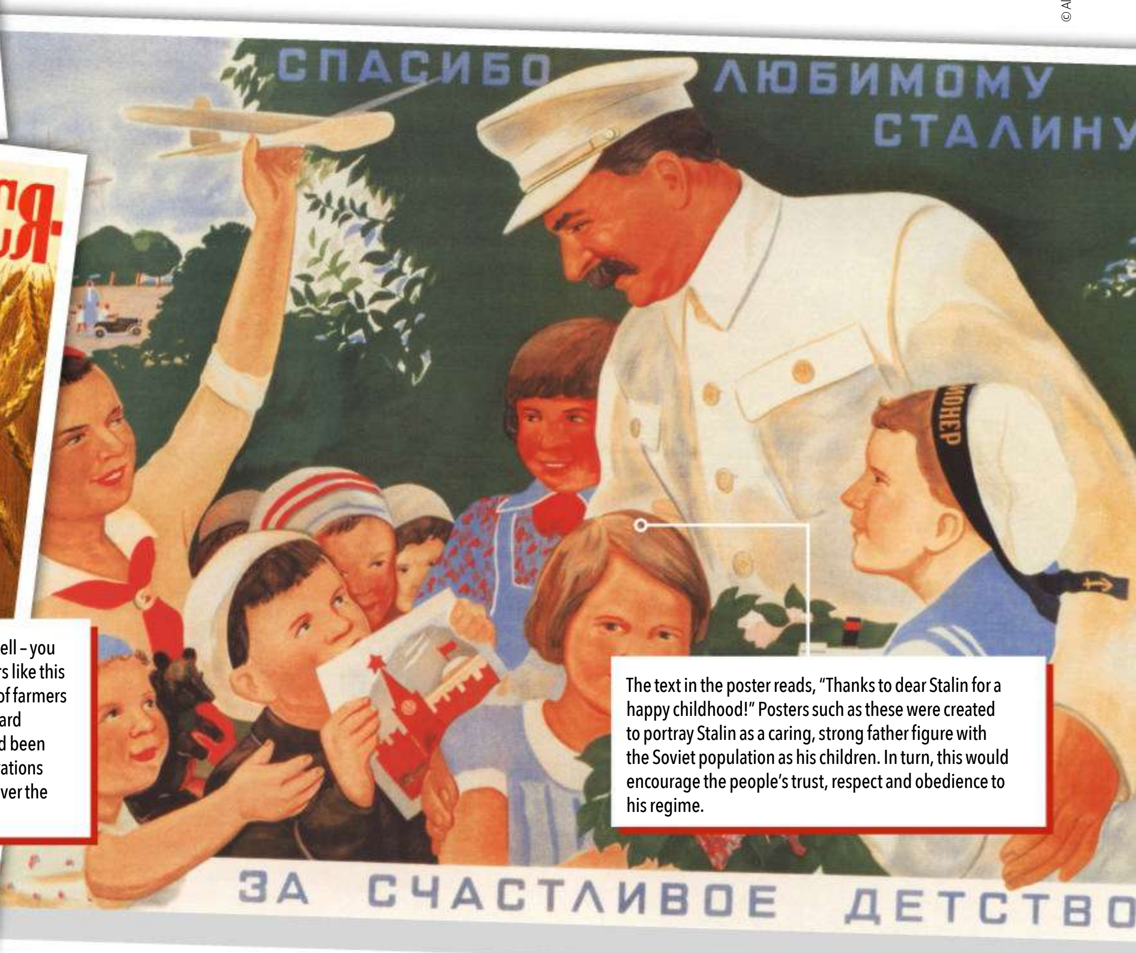
When Stalin turned 50 in December of 1929, a lavish celebration presented to the Russian people a messianic figure, the brother in arms of the adored Lenin and his humble disciple. This marked the beginning of the cult of personality surrounding Stalin that would follow him until his death and beyond. Through the use of propaganda, Russian history was rewritten. Stalin, not Trotsky, had served as Lenin's second in command during the October Revolution, and he grew not only spiritually but physically too as his modest five-foot, four-inch frame transformed to over six feet in the towering statues built in his image. Stalin wasn't a cruel or vicious tyrant; he was a loving and strong father figure. The phrase "Thank you, dear comrade Stalin, for a happy childhood!" appeared all over schools and nurseries, with children chanting the slogan over and over again at festivals. The title 'Father' was stolen from the priests he eliminated from his land and associated firmly with Stalin alone. And it was this 'Father Stalin' who the people adored and trusted, as the real man secretly orchestrated the deaths of millions of their friends and relatives.



The text reads, "Long live the 25th anniversary of the Leninist-Stalinist Komsomol." The Komsomol was the youth division of the Communist Party, and this poster encouraged youngsters to join by displaying a powerful united force of Stalin and Lenin. Once part of the organisation, every aspect of the youth's life would be lived in accordance to the party doctrine.



This poster urges people to "Work well – you will have a good wheat crop!" Posters like this were used to rouse the enthusiasm of farmers and agriculture workers to work toward rehabilitating the country after it had been ravaged by WWII. The vertical illustrations present an image of the ideal farm over the seasons of the year.



The text in the poster reads, "Thanks to dear Stalin for a happy childhood!" Posters such as these were created to portray Stalin as a caring, strong father figure with the Soviet population as his children. In turn, this would encourage the people's trust, respect and obedience to his regime.

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THE DICTATOR
Lenin dies and a vicious struggle for power ensues between the leading government figures. Stalin manages to eject his rivals, such as Trotsky, from the Soviet Union, placing himself at the top of the pyramid. **1924-1927**

FIVE-YEAR PLAN
Stalin begins the first of his five-year plans with the seizure of farms and factories. The result is mass famine, claiming the lives of millions. Export levels are maintained, with food shipped out as people starve. **1928-1933**

THE RED TERROR
Stalin begins a campaign of political repression known as the Great Purge. 20 million Russians are sent to Gulag camps and a third of the members of the Communist Party are executed on suspicion of disloyalty. **1934-1940**

Stalin met with Churchill and Roosevelt at the Yalta Conference

WAR LEADER
After Adolf Hitler breaks the non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union, Stalin's Red Army joins forces with the Allies in WWII. Victory eventually comes to the Soviet Union, but at the cost of millions of lives. **1941-1945**

DEATH OF A DICTATOR
Stalin suffers from a stroke and isn't found for several hours; his guards fear disturbing him. He remains bedridden for several days before dying on 5 March 1953. Rumours that he was poisoned persist through the media. **5 March 1953**

WORLD WAR II

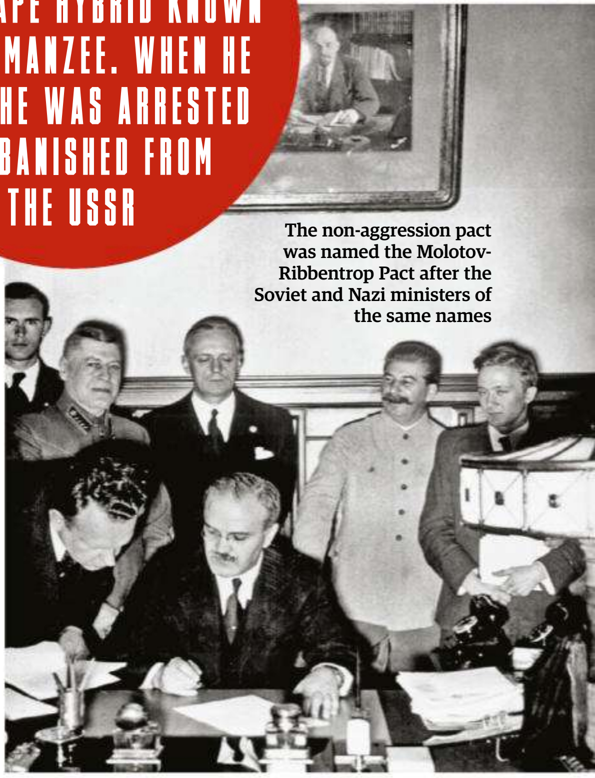
In the carnage of WWII, Stalin aligned his country with the 'decadent' West to defeat Hitler's Nazis

By the late 1930s, Stalin had found himself with very few international friends due to his extreme policies. After his attempts to sign an anti-German military alliance with Britain and France failed he was forced to ally with the last country he'd ever imagine – Nazi Germany. The Soviet Union entered into a non-aggression pact on 23 August 1939. This was exactly what Hitler needed to eliminate his fear of a war on two fronts, and eight days later Germany invaded Poland and the world was catapulted into war.

Although it was obvious to Stalin that the pact was only there to delay an inevitable conflict between the two powers, when Hitler invaded the Soviet Union in 1941, the Soviet leader was stunned. He had ignored the warnings of Churchill, shot German deserters who had warned him of the coming attack and even supplied Germany with materiel right up until that day. Stalin retreated to his dacha for three days, ignoring telephone calls and refusing to see anyone. He was facing the brutal reality of his own actions – a weakened military of which his own purge had eliminated 40,000 men including a host of key, talented advisors. But when he emerged it was as exactly the leader Russia needed. In the face of war, only the 'man of steel' possessed the strength required to unite his people in the face of an existential threat, and unite them he did.

As Hitler's army drove its way into the Soviet Union, Stalin's forces fought to push them back over four long and bloody years. Offensives such as the Battle of Stalingrad and the Battle of Kursk tested the Soviet leader's resolve as his cities ran red with the blood of millions of soldiers and civilians. The hard-fought victory finally came, but Stalin's gaze was now focused on achieving Soviet dominance over Eastern and Central Europe, and soon a very different, colder war would begin.

STALIN ORDERED A SCIENTIST TO CREATE A HUMAN-APE HYBRID KNOWN AS A HUMANZEE. WHEN HE FAILED HE WAS ARRESTED AND BANISHED FROM THE USSR


The non-aggression pact was named the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact after the Soviet and Nazi ministers of the same names

STALIN'S DIPLOMACY

How the Soviet leader tried to control and manage the only men who could rival him for power

ADOLF HITLER

The Father and the Führer

As a fascist and a communist, Hitler and Stalin couldn't have been further apart politically. Hitler's frequent condemnation of the Soviet Union and claims that Slavic people were inferior did little to help relations. However, it became in both of their interests to ally with each other. Of course, this façade of friendship did not last long, as Hitler invaded Soviet territory and the anticipated war broke out. The two dictators shared a certain respect for the other's power though, and Hitler is quoted as saying, "Stalin is one of the most extraordinary figures in world history. He began as a small clerk and he has never stopped being a clerk. Stalin owes nothing to rhetoric. He governs from his office, thanks to a bureaucracy that obeys his every nod and gesture."

WINSTON CHURCHILL

Putting up the Iron Curtain

The relationship between these two great leaders started off on rocky ground; Churchill's hatred of communism was well known, and Stalin was suspicious of the Western powers who he believed had abandoned his Red Army. But in order to beat the German invasion they had to assume a united front. Churchill was satisfied that his charm and personality had won the dictator over, but Stalin had secretly installed a network of spies in London and could plan his own perfect 'performance' when dealing with the British leader. Although photos and film footage show the two men seemingly free of past misgivings, in reality Stalin would always be the one nut Churchill was unable to crack.

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

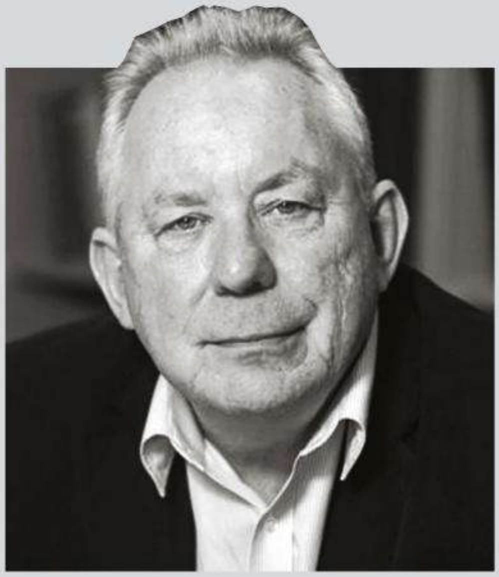
Looking after Uncle Joe

Roosevelt possessed a close relationship with Churchill and this was something he believed could be extended to Stalin, despite warnings from Churchill not to trust the Soviet leader. Roosevelt repeatedly sided with Stalin in order to encourage this relationship, which he believed would prevent Soviet expansion after the war. Instead of standing up to Stalin, something his advisors pushed for, Roosevelt gave him whatever he wanted and referred to him affectionately as 'Uncle Joe'. This naivety was pounced on and exploited by the Soviet dictator, and the results in the coming years proved that Roosevelt's approach was disastrous to the Soviet-American partnership that he had desired.

BENITO MUSSOLINI

The two tyrants

Despite believing in very different political systems, communism and fascism, Stalin and Mussolini had a lot in common. They both tried to establish governments with complete control over their citizens, they used propaganda to do so, and they transformed their countries. Mussolini had some admiration toward Stalin, mainly due to his respect for Lenin, but when he allied with Hitler he eliminated any chance of the two men forming a friendship. The Russian dictator considered the Italian leader to be weak and little more than a puppet for Hitler to use as he saw fit. Stalin dismissed Mussolini, paying him and his actions very little attention.



EXPERT OPINION

What kind of military leader was Russia's ultimate tyrant?

Geoffrey Roberts

Professor Geoffrey Roberts is Head of the School of History at UCC. His books include *Stalin's Wars: From World War to Cold War, 1939–1953* and *Stalin's General: The Life of Georgy Zhukov*, which was the winner of the Society for Military History Distinguished Book Award for Biography.

How involved a war leader was Stalin?

Stalin was involved in every aspect of the Soviet war effort – military, political, economic and diplomatic. He worked 16 hours a day and signed thousands of decrees and orders. Everyone who had dealings with him during the war was amazed by his knowledge of the technical details of the modern war machine. As supreme commander he was centrally involved in devising military strategy and directing large-scale operations. He was the indispensable figure of the Soviet high command.

Was Stalin a tactically astute leader?

Politically and diplomatically Stalin was highly astute. That is apparent from the close personal connections he forged with Churchill and Roosevelt during the war and the influence he exercised within the Allied grand alliance. [Regarding the military] Stalin was stronger on strategy than tactics and he made some bad mistakes during the first few months of the war. But he learnt from his mistakes and to take more notice of professional military advice.

Stalin's finest hour was in November 1941 when he decided to stay in Moscow when the Germans were at the gates of the Soviet capital. Stalin's presence in Moscow and some inspiring patriotic speeches he gave helped to steady Soviet nerves and defences and bought time for the preparation of a massive counteroffensive in December 1941 that drove the Germans away from the city. There are many great victories to choose from, but the Battle of Stalingrad stands out. Summer 1942 was another moment of crisis for the Soviet Union when a German thrust south threatened the security of Soviet oil supplies. Stalingrad, which barred the way to the German advance, almost fell to them, but the Red Army staged a heroic defence and managed to hang on to a bridgehead in the city. Once again, Stalin and his generals held their nerve and carefully prepared a counter-stroke that encircled the Germans in Stalingrad and forced them to surrender. Stalingrad was a defeat from which the Germans never really recovered.

What was his greatest failure?

It is often said that Stalin's greatest failure was that he did not anticipate the German invasion of Russia in June 1941. I think the failure was more one of strategic imagination and preparation. Stalin and his generals underestimated the power of the German attack and overestimated the strength of Soviet defences and their capacity to counterattack. Stalin knew the Germans were going to attack, if not precisely when, but he was confident he and the Red Army could deal with all contingencies, including a surprise attack. In a sense he was right – the Soviet Union was able to survive the German invasion, but the cost was enormous and almost catastrophic. By the end of 1941 the Germans had reached Moscow, surrounded Leningrad and penetrated deep into the southern USSR. Perhaps the most grievous loss was Kiev, the Ukrainian capital, which fell to the Germans in September 1941. Stalin personally refused to allow the withdrawal of the Red Army from the Kiev area, with the result that several hundred thousand troops were encircled and captured by their German enemies.

Do you think the massive casualties of the Soviet army affected Stalin?

Stalin was a person of great feeling but little human empathy. He could be a very emotional person, subject to violent mood swings, and often displayed great sentimentality as well as anger. He was also an ideologue and an intellectual who thought in terms of grand designs and abstractions and spent much of his life engrossed in the written word and in political contexts that were sheltered from the brutal realities of war. These latter qualities helped inoculate Stalin from the sufferings of his troops. Stalin was utopian and an idealist who believed that the ends justified the means, and he had the emotional make-up that enabled him to make – and live with – countless extremely harsh decisions.

How much did Stalin's leadership contribute to the ultimate victory?

I have made myself unpopular with people who see only evil in Stalin by arguing that the Soviet dictator was the one essential Allied leader during the Second World War. Without his leadership the Soviet Union would in all probability have lost the war with Nazi Germany. The Soviet system that confronted Hitler's regime was Stalin's system, the system he had created in the 1920s and '30s. If Stalin hadn't performed well during the war the system would have collapsed in the face of the devastating blows it received. There was no substitute Soviet leader.

How would you sum up Stalin's leadership style during WWII?

Energetic, authoritative, calculating, controlled and ruthless. He made a lot of mistakes but was more right than wrong after the first few disastrous months of the war. He was a learning war leader. In relation to his generals, he reinvented himself as a team player, as a combination of chairman and managing director. He imposed a harsh disciplinary regime on the Red Army and the whole country and had no compunction in destroying those he saw as his enemies. Stalin was a great warlord, but he was also a ruthless and brutal one. He did great harm to millions of innocent people as well as serving humanity well in defeating Hitler and the Nazis. It is that combination of good and evil that makes Stalin the most paradoxical as well as the most important dictator of the 20th century.

RISE TO POWER Three key reasons for the rise of the man of steel

LINKS WITH LENIN

1 When Lenin went into semi-retirement, Stalin acted as his intermediary, with unprecedented access to the ailing leader. Stalin exploited this after Lenin's death, elevating Lenin to a godlike figure and himself as his loyal disciple.

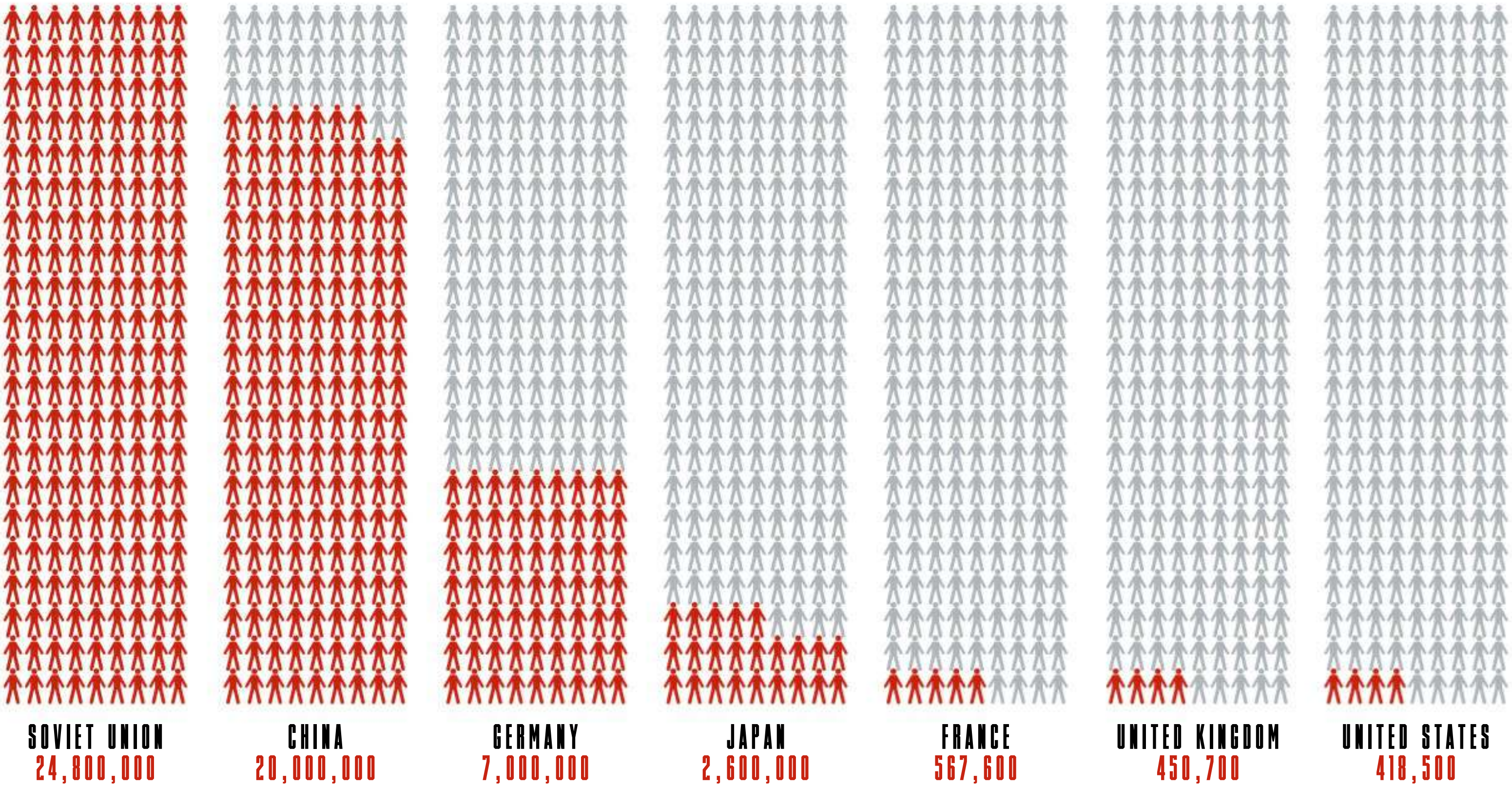
POLITICAL ALLIANCES

2 Stalin was able to set up an alliance with key figures in the Communist Party and replace enemies. Because of this, *Lenin's Testament*, a document written by Lenin that called for Stalin's dismissal, was prevented from being revealed.

REIGN OF TERROR

3 Stalin was able to isolate and eject any members of the party who did not agree with him. This later turned into a regime of executions, and the resulting atmosphere of fear ensured his authority would not be questioned.

A HEAVY PRICE: WWII'S DEATH TOLL



5 FACTS ABOUT STALINGRAD

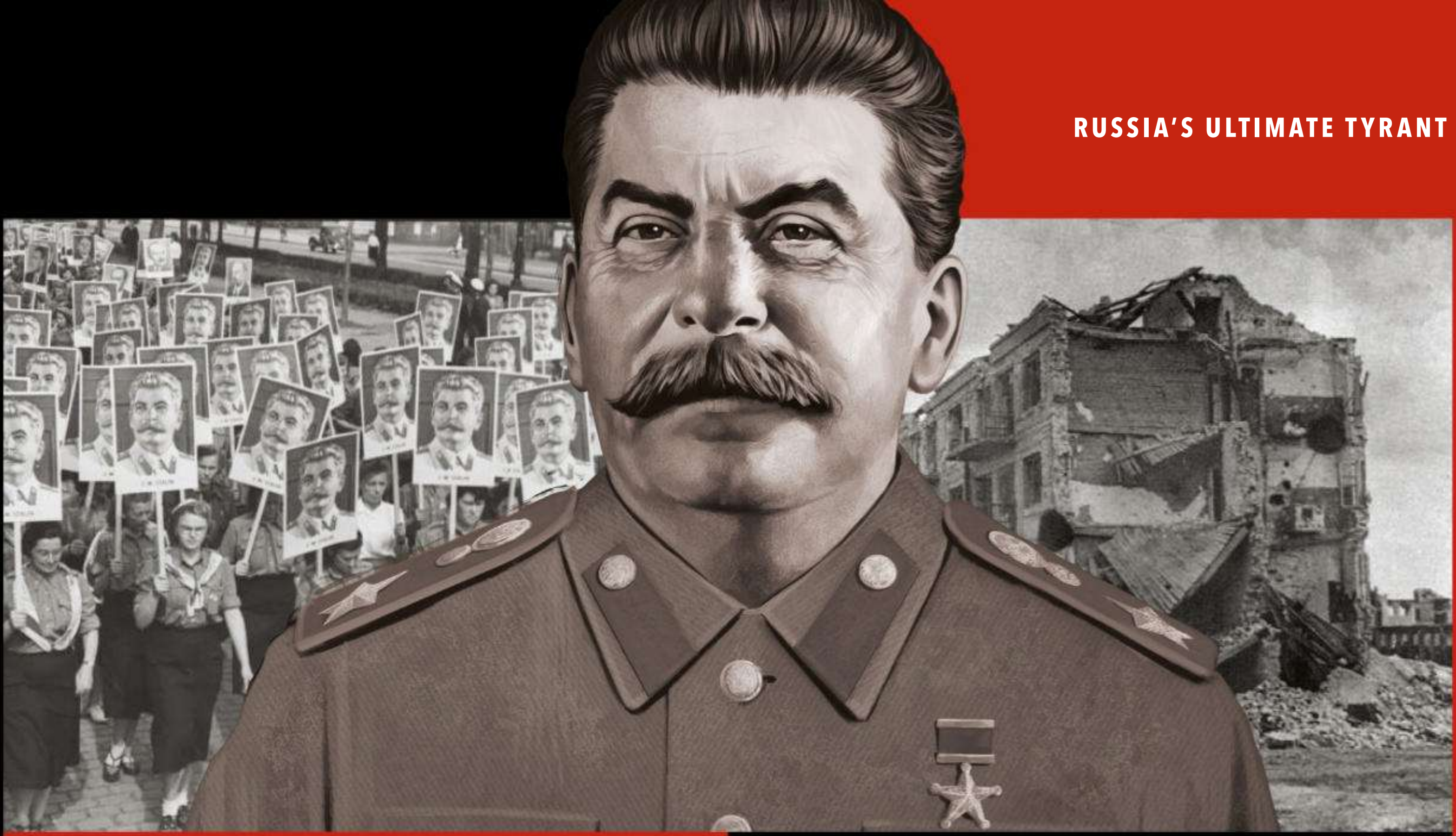
1 Around 91,000 German soldiers were taken prisoner at Stalingrad; by the end of the war only 5,000 of them returned to Germany.

2 Hitler ordered the Sixth Army under Friedrich Paulus to fight to the last bullet. Paulus commented, "I've no intention of shooting myself for this Bohemian corporal."

3 One of the deliveries dropped to the German soldiers amid the biting Russian winter was 20 tons of vodka and summer uniforms.

4 The living conditions of the soldiers were so terrible that a Red Army conscript assigned to Stalingrad had a life expectancy of just 24 hours.

5 A national day of mourning was ordered by Hitler – not for the loss of men but for the shame the surrender brought to Germany.



GREAT RULER OR TYRANT?

LOVING FATHER

Stalin adored and doted on his only daughter, Svetlana, calling her his "little sparrow". Possessing the red hair and freckles of his own beloved mother, Svetlana described the pride on her father's face as he watched her drive a car: "He sat next to me, beaming with joy. My father couldn't believe I knew how to drive." Even when she sought asylum in the U.S. she refused to condemn her father, proclaiming the love and respect she felt for him.

Stalin's treatment of his first son, Yakov, was so severe that he attempted to take his own life. He survived, but Stalin simply responded by saying, "He can't even shoot straight." Yakov went on to serve in the Red Army but was captured in WWII. His safe return was promised to his father in exchange for German Field Marshal Friedrich Paulus. Stalin rejected this offer. It is believed that Yakov subsequently committed suicide by running into an electric fence at a concentration camp.

MODERNISATION

During his years as dictator Stalin led the Soviet Union out of its previously backward economy and moved it forward with mass industrialisation. Stalin's five-year plans achieved rapid modernisation despite a very weak economy. New products were developed, the scale and efficiency of production increased, and ultimately this mass industrialisation helped greatly in achieving a Soviet victory in WWII.

Although the economic growth under Stalin was significant, figures of the rate of growth are greatly disputed, ranging from the official estimate of 13.9 per cent to the low Western figure of 2.9 per cent. One thing is certain, though; the cost of this modernisation was millions of innocent lives. Stalin's brutal regime caused mass famine across the rural population, with a final death toll of up to 10 million people.

DEATH

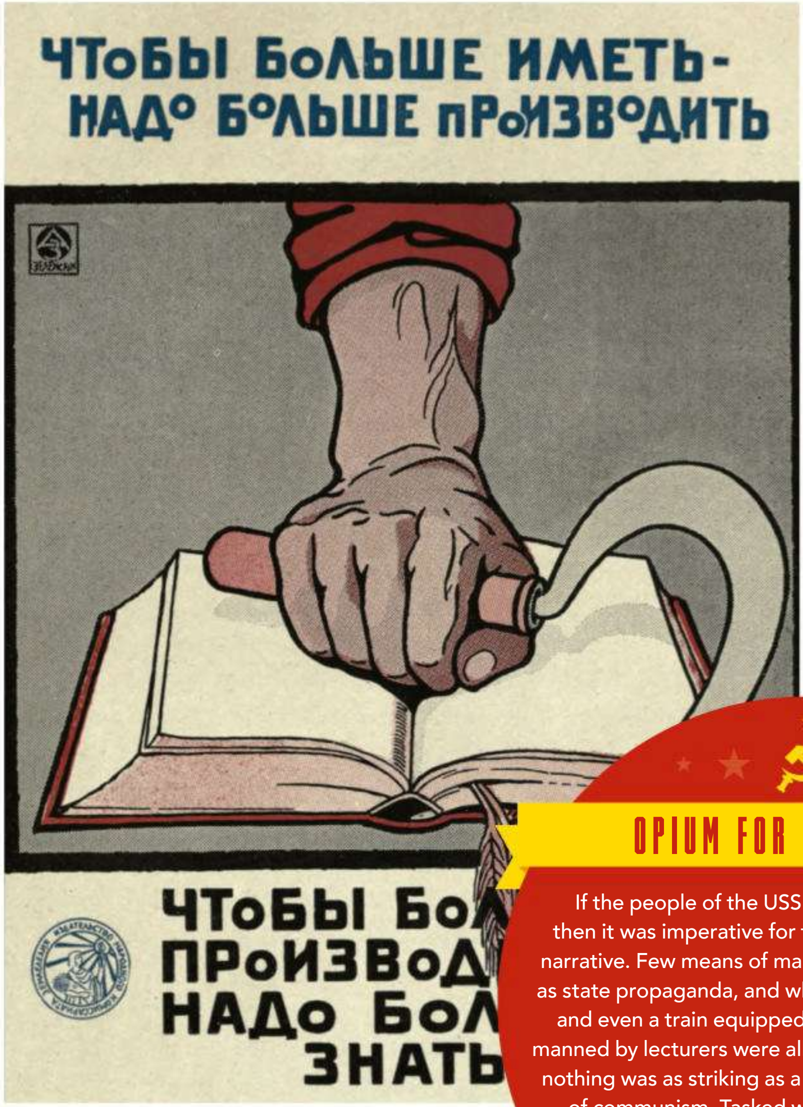
When Stalin died, the collective grief that swept through his people was tangible. People wept openly and on the day of his funeral mass wakes were held across the country. To many Stalin was their country's greatest leader, winning WWII and purging the land of those who would plunge Russia back into the rule of the Tsars. When his body was placed in the Hall of Columns, people lined to pay their respects for three days.

In the early hours of 2 March 1953, Stalin suffered a stroke. Despite being the most powerful man in Russia, he lay helpless, alone and soaked in his own stale urine until 10 p.m. that night. Ironically, it was the reign of terror that he himself had constructed that put the final nail in his own coffin, as his guards were scared that entering his room and disobeying his orders would result in their death.

SOCIAL FREEDOM

Women's lives improved significantly under Stalin's rule. They enjoyed equal rights in education and employment, allowing them to succeed in careers previously closed to them. The generation born during Stalin's rule was the first almost universally literate generation in Russian history. Universal healthcare also increased the average life span and sent the numbers of diseases like typhus and cholera to a record low.

Many basic human rights were removed under Stalin, and he conducted a removal of all religion through the use of atheistic education, anti-religious propaganda and discriminatory laws. Churches, mosques, temples and sacred monuments were destroyed. Anyone who showed association with religion ran the risk of being killed, along with the tens of thousands of priests, monks and nuns who were martyred under his orders.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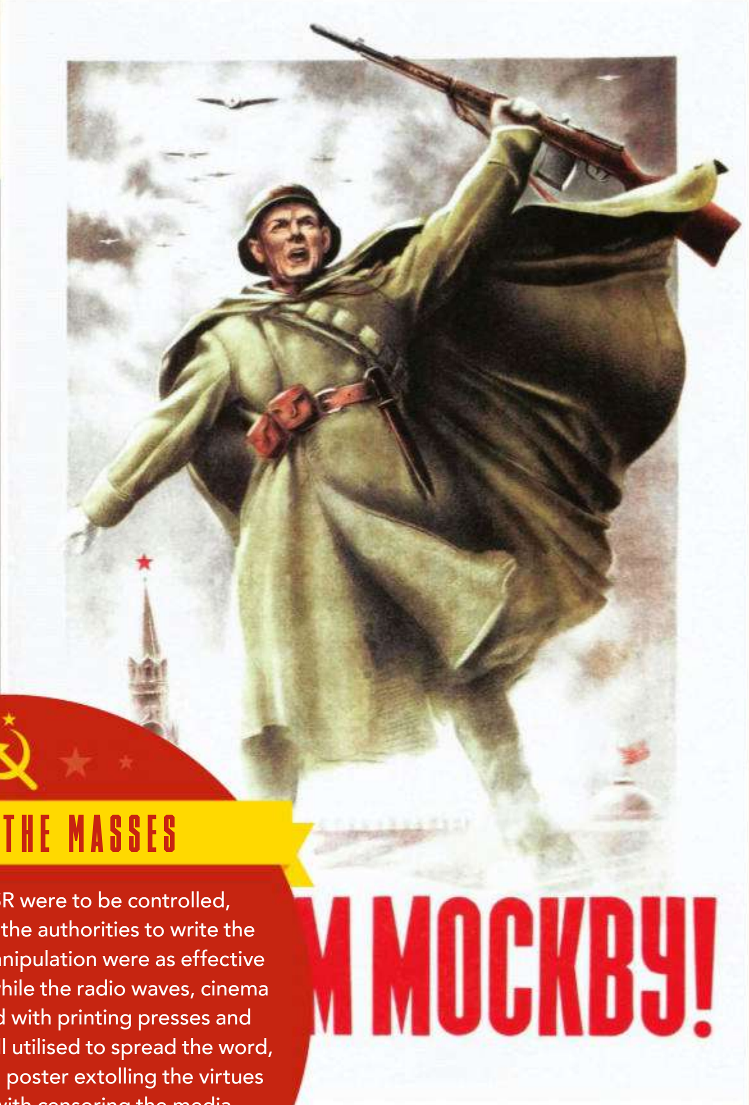
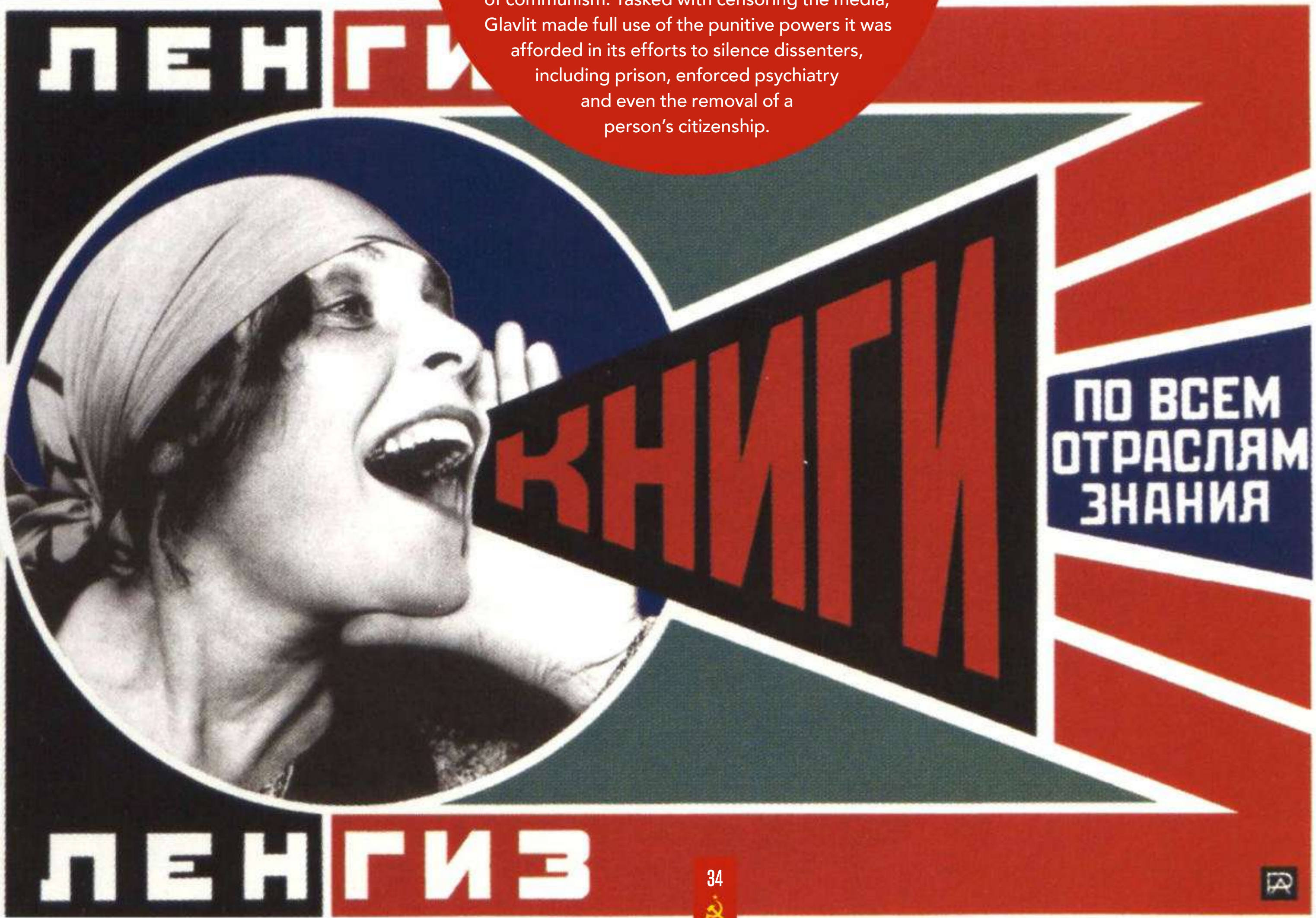


OPIUM FOR THE MASSES

If the people of the USSR were to be controlled, then it was imperative for the authorities to write the narrative. Few means of manipulation were as effective as state propaganda, and while the radio waves, cinema and even a train equipped with printing presses and manned by lecturers were all utilised to spread the word, nothing was as striking as a poster extolling the virtues of communism. Tasked with censoring the media, Glavlit made full use of the punitive powers it was afforded in its efforts to silence dissenters, including prison, enforced psychiatry and even the removal of a person's citizenship.


ЛЕНГИ
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ПО ВСЕМ
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ЗНАНИЯ
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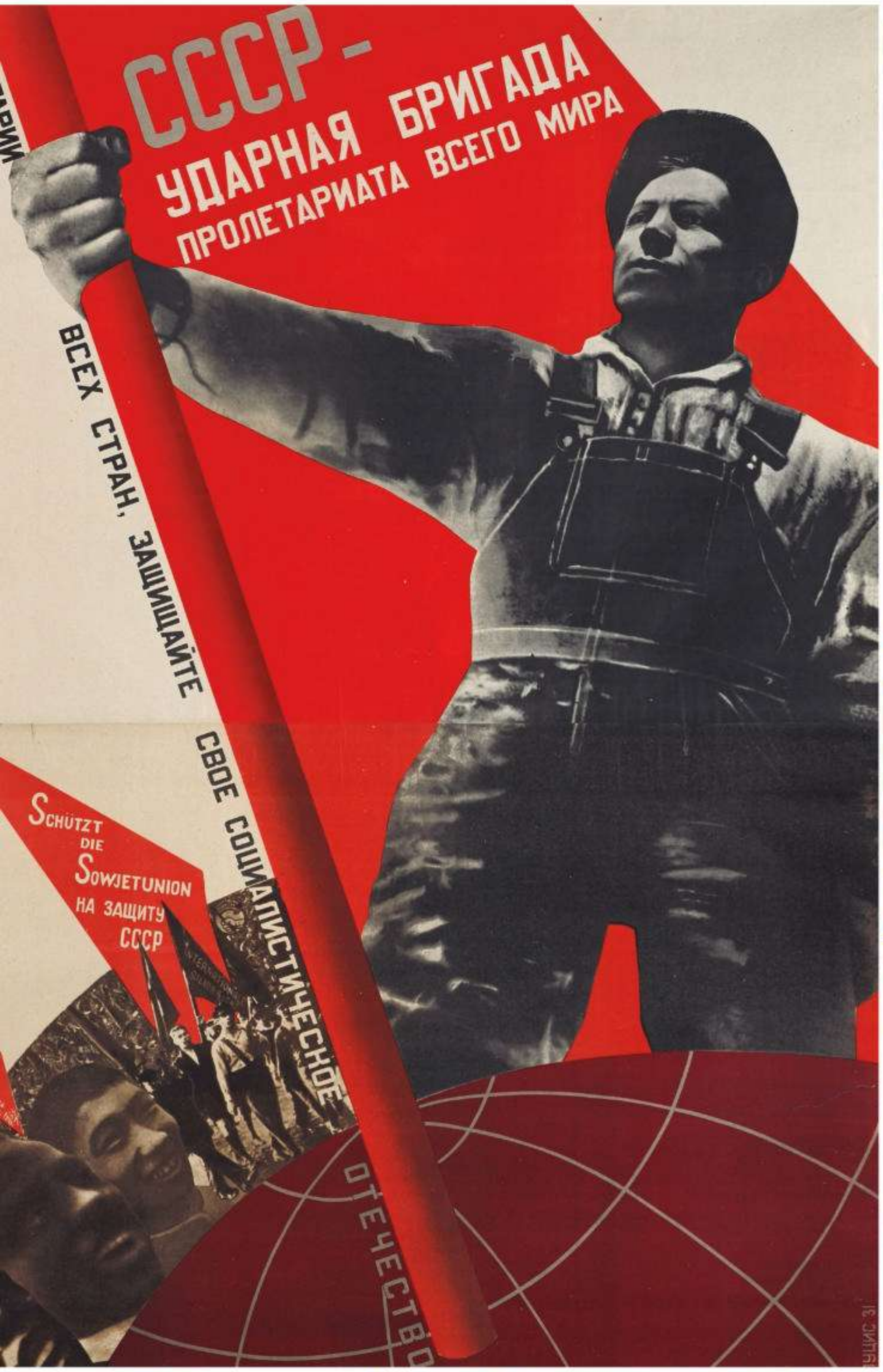
СССР –
УДАРНАЯ БРИГАДА
ПРОЛЕТАРИАТА ВСЕГО МИРА
ВСЕХ СТРАН, ЗАЩИЩАЙТЕ СВОЕ СОЦИАЛИСТИЧЕСКОЕ ОТЕЧЕСТВО
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НА ЗАЩИТУ СССР
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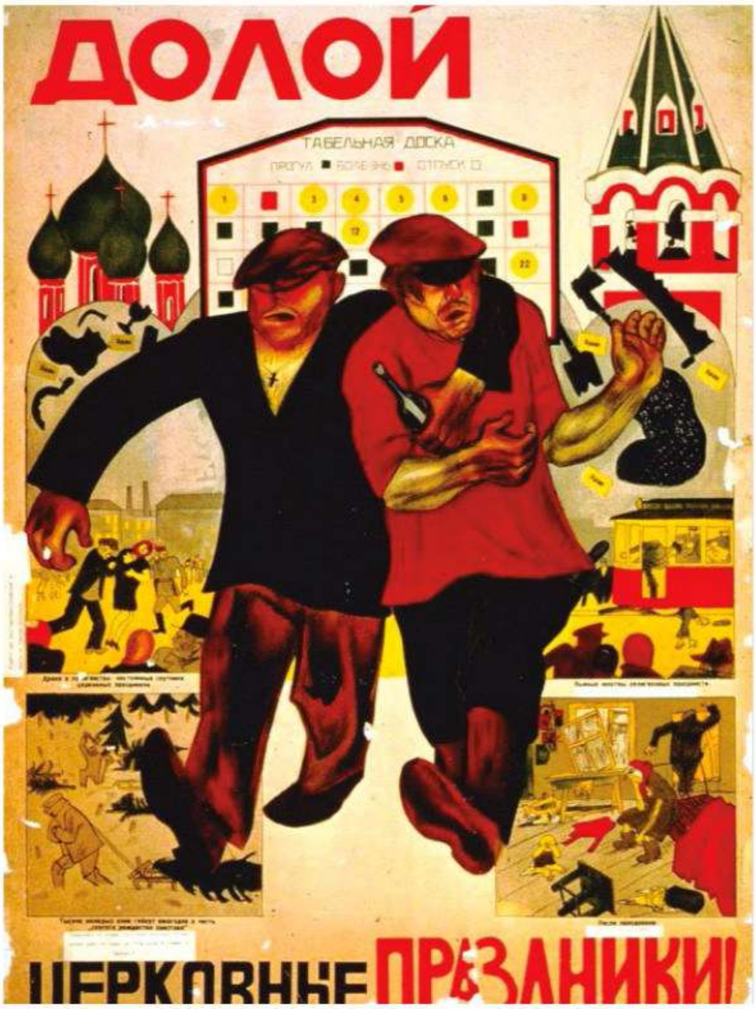
ДОЛОЙ
ТАБЕЛЬНАЯ ДОСКА
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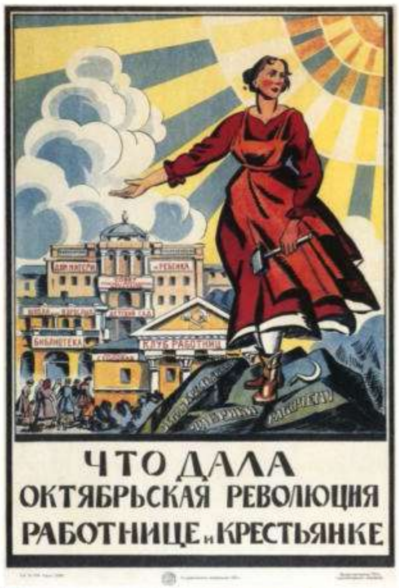
ЧТО ДАЛА
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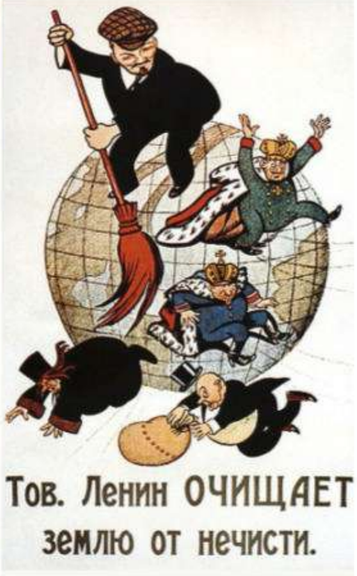
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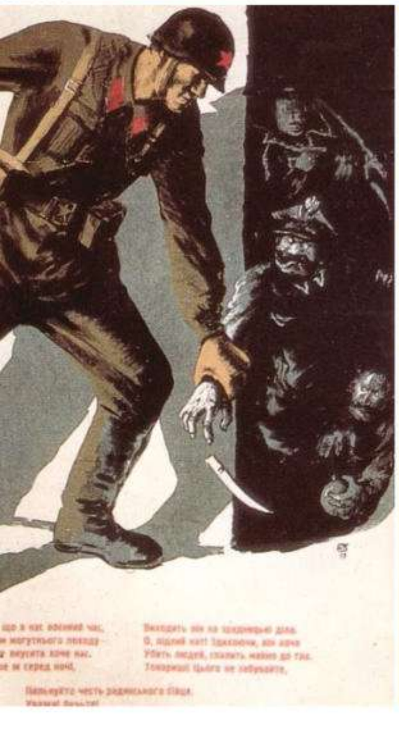

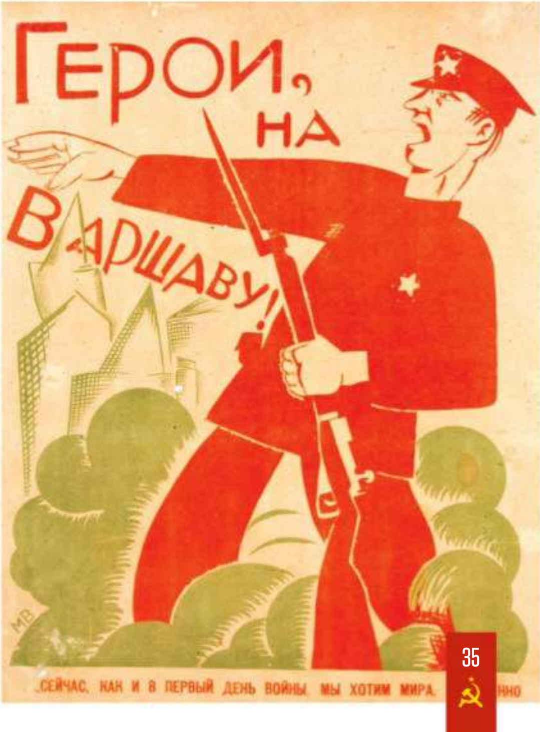
ГЕРОИ,
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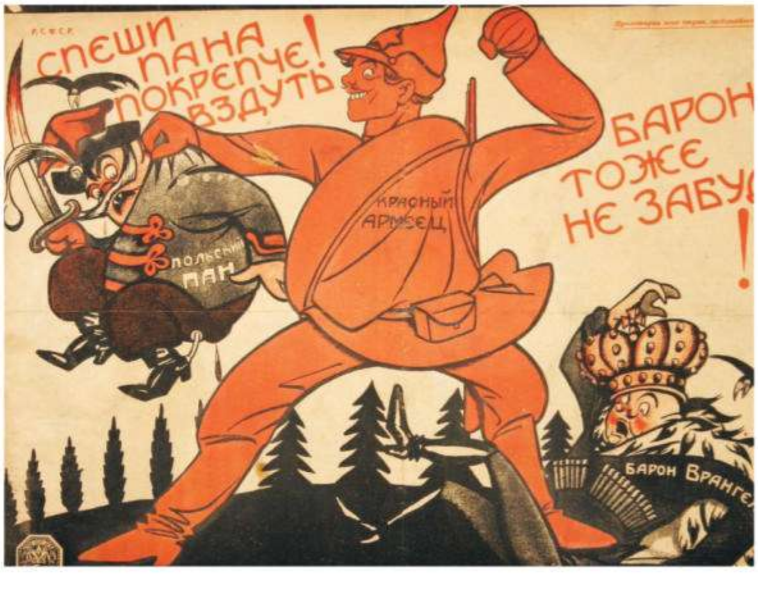
„СЕЙЧАС, КАК И В ПЕРВЫЙ ДЕНЬ ВОЙНЫ, МЫ ХОТИМ МИРА.


РСФСР
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БАРОН ТОЖЕ НЕ ЗАБУ
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ПОЛЬСКИЙ ПАН
БАРОН ВРАНГЕ

THE HOLODOMOR

Beginning in 1932, a vast famine swept Ukraine. Millions died in the tragedy known as the Holodomor, but the causes and Stalin's role in exacerbating the crisis remain controversial

WRITTEN BY GREG KING

Between 1932–1933, millions of people died from a brutal famine in Ukraine. The roots of the crisis lay in diminished harvests, but the catastrophe was exacerbated by an unforgiving Soviet policy of collectivisation and calculated efforts by Stalin to crack down on Ukrainian separatism. For decades the Soviet Union denied the tragedy; even today the causes and the death toll remain subjects of international controversy.

The tragedy is known as the Holodomor, derived from the Ukrainian words *holod* (hunger) and *mor*, (death). The term Holodomor roughly translates as 'to kill by starvation'. This reflects the widespread view that much of the famine was man-made, a deliberate creation of the Stalinist regime to weaken the resolve of the Ukrainian population.

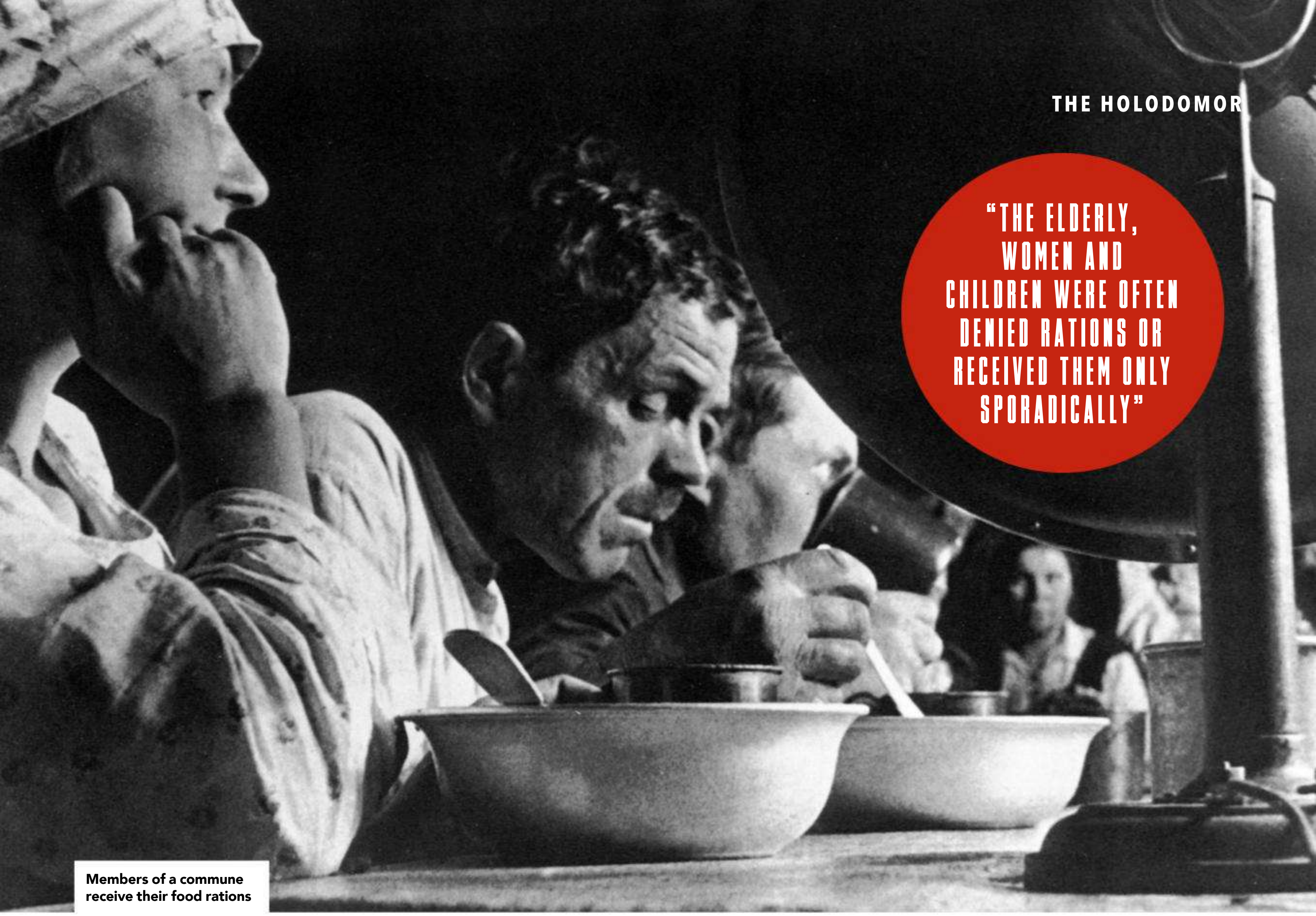
In 1929, Stalin introduced agricultural collectivisation as part of his first Five Year Plan, forcing families to hand over their private farms, livestock and equipment to authorities and to work for the government. This policy proved difficult in the Ukraine, which had long provided Russia with the majority of its agriculture. The wealthier peasants had the most to lose: the state branded them *kulaks* (tight-fisted) and denounced them as enemies of the USSR; in truth, many of the condemned were poor, but their resistance to collectivisation marked them out for retribution.

Starting in 1930, the state began to liquidate them. Some were evicted from their farms and sent to labour camps; some were arrested and exiled; some were executed. By 1932, nearly 2 million Ukrainian resisters had been sent to Siberia, where, lacking food or housing, they often perished.

Collectivisation hampered productivity. Left without incentive, the yield of some farmers decreased; the arrest and exile of others also left a significant gap in the available manpower. Ukraine had largely harvested wheat; the Five Year Plan disrupted the established order by insisting that collective farms add cotton or sugar beets to their crops. The success rate for these new introductions was dismal. Droughts played into the growing crisis, as did government confiscation of all crops and Stalin's decision to continue grain exports even as his famine threatened his people.

Moscow expected Ukraine to provide one-third of the country's grain harvest. When the numbers for 1931 came in they exceeded expectations; over-zealous local officials had collected more tons than called for in their quotas, resulting in a surprise surplus. Any good bureaucrat in Moscow could have spotted the disparity, but rather than view 1931 as an anomaly, they expected the same quotas to be met in 1932. Stalin would later blame the famine on officials who had over-estimated

The corpse of a Holodomor victim lies in the street



Members of a commune receive their food rations

"THE ELDERLY, WOMEN AND CHILDREN WERE OFTEN DENIED RATIONS OR RECEIVED THEM ONLY SPORADICALLY"

the harvest, but his own actions deliberately exacerbated the problem.

By July 1932, Ukrainian crops had yielded just a sixth of the previous year's harvest; by the end of the year only 4.3 tons of grain had been harvested, as opposed to 7.2 million the previous year. Unable to understand the devastating effect of the droughts, the loss of agricultural manpower and the change in crops as factors contributing to the looming crisis, Moscow insisted that the poor harvest was the work of kulaks, Ukrainian nationalists or foreign agents and began fomenting public opinion against Ukrainian farmers.

There is no doubt that Stalin's brutal Ukrainian policies were driven by his suspicion that the federation teemed with nationalists and anti-Soviet elements. In his increasing paranoia he saw enemies everywhere, and the famine became a convenient excuse he could use to root out those he viewed as enemies of the state.

In late 1932, the crisis passed from natural disaster to man-made tragedy. Stalin used the ongoing catastrophe to launch a merciless programme of Ukrainian repression. However, the kulaks were not the only victims; Moscow's policies became, in effect, an organised effort to root out Ukrainian nationalism, and there was no measure too barbaric.

Stalin held Ukrainian intellectuals in particular contempt, believing that they worked to undermine the state in an attempt to achieve independence. In addition to the farmers, thousands of writers, professors, artists, poets and philosophers were also arrested, exiled or shot. Within a few short years the federation's culture had all but been erased. Thus Stalin's policies became an orchestrated effort to starve Ukraine into submission.

Officials in Moscow introduced a food rationing system that focused largely on industrial workers and urban residents; those involved in agriculture had reduced rations, and these were allotted based on the type and duration of labour, meaning the most vulnerable – the elderly, women and children – were often denied rations or received them only sporadically. Starvation soon became a serious problem.

On 7 August 1932, the Soviet Government introduced a new law "on the safekeeping of socialist property" that imposed draconian penalties on theft of anything deemed to belong to the state, including food or any unharvested grain. This law was largely directed only at Ukraine. It singled out "kulaks, former traders, and other socially-alien persons" for harsh prison sentences of up to ten years or the death penalty. Three months later, Stalin issued an even more savaged order: "Starting today, there will be immediate cessation of delivery of goods, complete suspension of cooperative and state trade in the villages, and removal of all available goods from cooperative and state stores."

Farmers deemed enemies of the state were no longer allowed to purchase goods or provisions necessary to sustain life. This order was to remain in place "until all collectives and individual peasants begin to honestly and conscientiously fulfil their duty to the working class and to the Red Army by supplying grain."

To enforce these new laws the state organised brutal quasi-military brigades of armed factory workers and soldiers, who raided villages and seized all grain and goods from those suspected of being enemies. Those who resisted were shot. "The authorities confiscated all the bread," recalled one survivor, "removed it from the villages, loaded grain into the railway coaches and took it away someplace. They searched the houses, taking away everything to the smallest thing. All the vegetable gardens, all the cellars were raked out and everything was taken away."

Another law allowed these military brigades to confiscate all livestock from those farms that had failed to meet their quotas. Within six months

Carts filled with bread leaving Ukraine

nearly 55,000 people had been imprisoned and over 2,000 executed under these laws, numbers that continued to swell in 1933. To prevent the starving people from fleeing, the NKVD sealed the Ukrainian borders in January 1933 and imposed new internal passport restrictions, denying travel papers to the desperate farmers and peasants. Military blockades went up and agents prowled the highways and railway stations. Under these measures, more than 200,000 people were arrested in early 1933, either imprisoned or sent back to their barren farms to die from hunger.

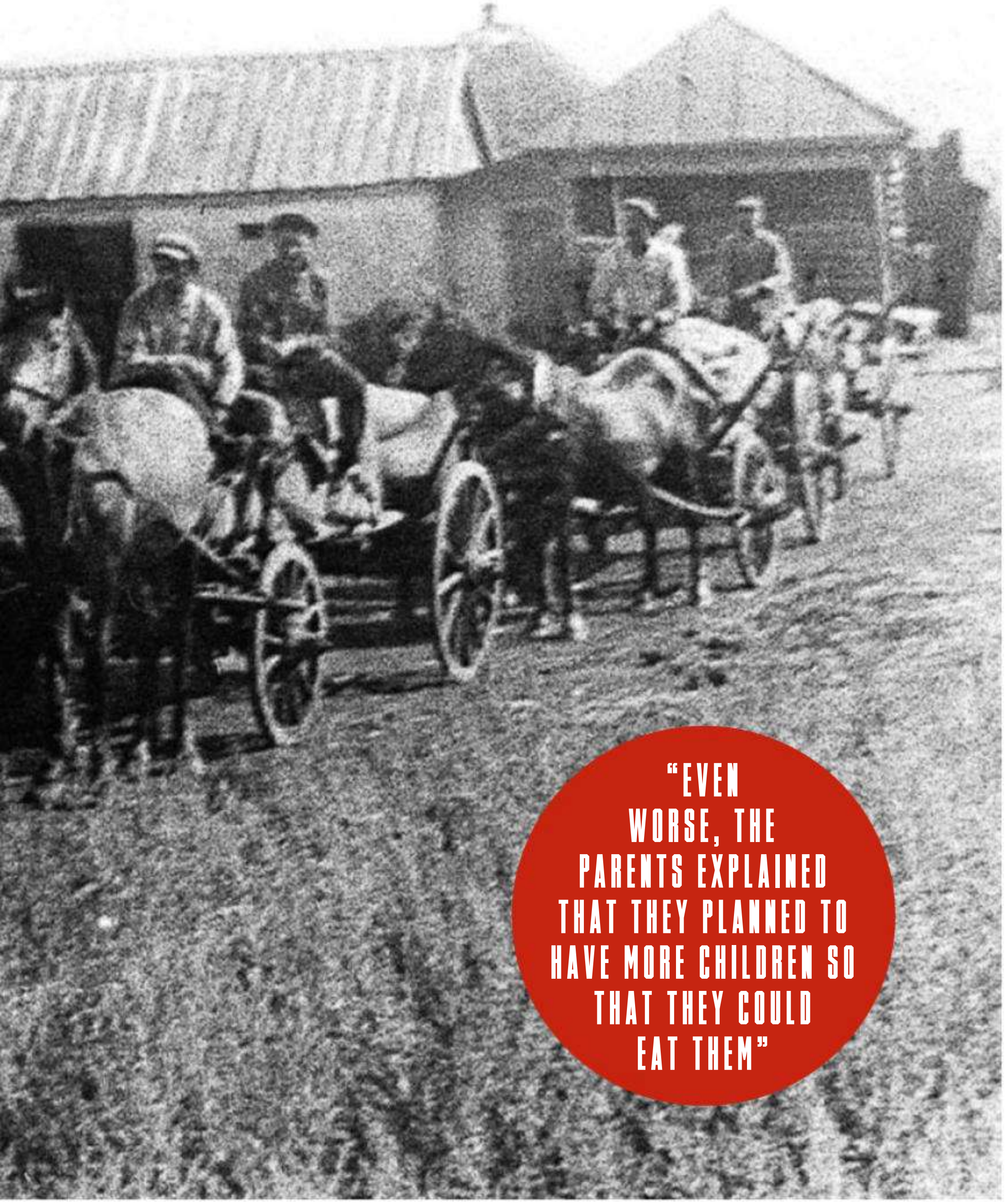
Moscow first received reports of epidemic starvation in Ukraine by early 1933; some relief in the form of food was sent south to the affected areas, but the distribution was disorganised and subject to Stalin's dictates, so those deemed enemies would receive no aid. Even at the height of the crisis, the government exported nearly 2 million tons of grain, which would have fed millions of Soviet citizens.

The famine decimated entire villages: by the summer of 1933, an estimated 24,000 people were dying of starvation every single day. The future Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev remembered that in his small Ukrainian village, "Nearly half of the population starved to death, including my father's brother and two sisters." Survival was now a daily struggle. Livestock was the first edible item to disappear: those animals who survived being eaten themselves starved to death, as their owners could not feed them. Some farmers tossed the carcasses into pits for burial but were inevitably interrupted by neighbours. "I still remember people screaming by one burial pit," recalled an eyewitness. "Driven to madness by hunger, they were ripping the meat of the dead animals. The stronger ones were getting bigger pieces."

When the livestock disappeared people ate their pets. The desperate chased dogs and cats, killing and cooking them. Some starving farmers, worn out and unable to continue the chase, simply collapsed from exhaustion and died in the streets and fields. "People were lying everywhere as dead flies," said one villager. "The stench was awful." The horrific sight became commonplace. "The dogs ate the ones that were not buried," said one villager. But soon all of the dogs had vanished. "Finally, we couldn't hear them barking anymore," recalled a resident of Uspenska.

Next the fish and frogs in the rivers disappeared, then swallows, pigeons and other birds. People ate leather shoes, worms, flowers and the bark and blossoms off trees. "We tried to survive the best we could," said one Ukrainian. "We collected grass, goose-foot and rotten potatoes and made pancakes or soups from putrid beans or nettles."

Hungry families secretly bartered furniture, clothing and gold teeth for handfuls of grain, risking arrest in an effort to stave off death. But the deaths continued. The brigades swept through villages, loading carts with the corpses of those who had perished in the streets. They were also



> “EVEN WORSE, THE PARENTS EXPLAINED THAT THEY PLANNED TO HAVE MORE CHILDREN SO THAT THEY COULD EAT THEM”

known to grab the emaciated and throw them into common graves while they were still alive.

People drank water to fill their empty stomachs: they shambled along in near skeletal form, bellies bloated in agony, until they fell. Death was everywhere. Galina Gubenko, a young village girl from the Poltava region, remembered: “People died at work; it was of no concern whether your body was swollen, whether you could work, whether you have eaten, whether you could – you had to go and work. Otherwise you were the enemy of the people.”

She recalled country roads strewn with the bodies of people who had scoured the fields in search of the smallest morsel (farmers were denied access to an internal passport that would have enabled them to search for food in the cities). Some had died of hunger in their quest; others had fallen victim to the military patrols, who “hunted them down, collected everything, trampled down the gathered grain, and beat the people”.

When the animals disappeared, people began to eat dead friends and relatives. Hollow-eyed peasants tore away at the mass graves, ripping arms and legs from the corpses and retching as they consumed the rotting flesh. Many turned to cannibalism. Families with several children would select the weakest to devour. “One of our neighbours,” recalled Olexandra Rafalska, “came home to find that her husband, suffering from severe starvation, had eaten their own baby, a daughter. The woman went crazy.” Sergei Lozovi remembered that his neighbours “cut off their children’s heads and salted them away for meat”. People “smelled meat frying in the smoke coming from the chimney and, noticing the absence of the children, entered the house. When they asked about the children, the parents began to weep and told the whole story.” Even worse, the parents explained that they planned to have more children so they could eat them, or else “They would die in great pain and it would be the end of the family.”

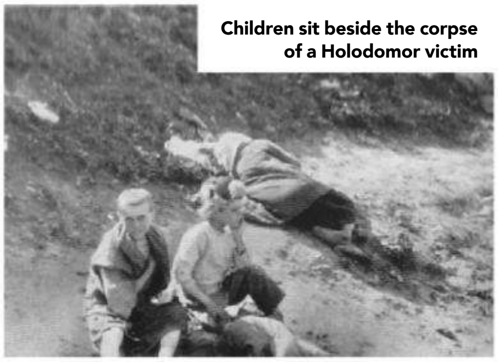
GENOCIDE OR NOT?

Although the Holodomor began as a natural disaster, many scholars believe that Stalin’s anti-Ukrainian policies pushed the tragedy into the realm of deliberate genocide

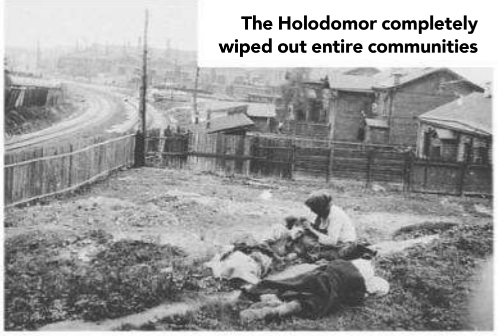
Few dispute that the onset of the famine owed its existence to natural phenomenon and bureaucratic ineptitude, but it is difficult to reconcile Stalin’s anti-Ukrainian policies with any assertion that his intent was not the decimation of the republic’s ethnic majority. In 1953, Dr. Raphael Lemkin, who wrote the United Nations’ Genocide Convention, deemed the Holodomor “a classic example of genocide” meant to cause “the destruction of the Ukrainian nation.”

In 2003, 25 countries signed a joint UN statement: “In the former Soviet Union millions of men, women and children fell victims to the cruel actions and policies of the totalitarian regime. The Great Famine of 1932–1933 in Ukraine took from 7 million to 10 million innocent lives and became a national tragedy for the Ukrainian people.” The word “genocide” never appeared.

In October 2008, the European Parliament officially recognised the Holodomor as a crime against humanity, though it did not label it as genocide. Stung by these diplomatic decisions, in November 2008 the Ukrainian Parliament formally declared that the Holodomor had indeed been a genocide. Fifteen other countries, including Australia, Canada and Poland, have also declared the Holodomor an act of genocide. The U.S. and most European countries, including the UK, have condemned it as a crime against humanity but refuse to label it as genocide.



Children sit beside the corpse of a Holodomor victim



The Holodomor completely wiped out entire communities

The practice of parents killing and consuming their sons and daughters became so prevalent that the Soviet Government actually distributed posters proclaiming, “It is a barbaric act to eat your own children.” At least 2,500 people were convicted of cannibalism between 1933–1934, though the actual numbers were undoubtedly higher.

The harvest slowly began returning to normal by 1935, but recovery would not be complete until after WWII. When reports of the tragedy first reached Europe and America, Soviet officials derided them as capitalist propaganda and even refused aid that was offered. Some enterprising journalists and officials did their best to spread word of what was happening, but few took notice. Others, like Walter Duranty of the *New York Times*, assured readers that stories of widespread famine were fabrications: Stalin’s Soviet Union, Duranty insisted, was a workers’ paradise.

The denials continue to this day. The Holodomor remains a thorn in the side of modern Russia. Until the advent of glasnost (a policy of openness and transparency), the subject, like so much in Soviet history, was forbidden. In the revisionist swing that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russian studies of the famine began revealing the full horror of what had happened and squarely placed the blame on Stalin and his totalitarian state. But the pendulum has once again swung back. In recognising the undeniable tragedy, Vladimir Putin’s Russia has consistently pushed back against the idea that it was in any way genocidal.

In 2008, the Russian State Duma denounced Stalin’s general famine policies of 1932–1933 as “disregarding the lives of people in the pursuit of economic and political goals” yet insisted “there exists no historical evidence that the famine was organised against any ethnic group.” This has become the modern Russian line: the Holodomor was a tragedy shared by all Soviet people, one exacerbated by Stalin’s policies but not the result of a concerted effort against the Ukrainian people.

The famine, coupled with Stalin’s policies against Ukraine, decimated a generation. The death toll was staggering, but it will never be known precisely how many fell victim to starvation. The Soviet Government kept diligent records but these were selective and often failed to include those who died by being sent into exile to starve and those who succumbed to the typhoid and typhus epidemics that ravaged the stricken countryside. Some estimates of the death toll reach 20 million, though this number lacks statistical support.

More commonly accepted figures rendered the collective death toll at between 7 to 10 million people. In 2010, the Ukrainian Court of Appeals declared that approximately 10 million people had perished in these years of immense suffering. It also stated that 3.9 million had starved to death; of this number, a staggering 2 million starved to death in just three months from May to July 1933. The other deaths occurred from widespread illness exacerbated by the famine, state-ordered executions and enforced exile. The effects of malnutrition and rampant disease lingered, further decimating Ukraine. Some measure of these terrible statistics comes from the life expectancy figures: on average, girls born in 1933 lived to just ten years, while life expectancy for boys was a mere seven years.

The famine may initially have been started by drought, which in turn led to poor harvests, but Stalin’s policies carried it into the realm of man-made catastrophe. Historians might continue to argue about the precise causes and who bears responsibility, but there can be little doubt that Stalin’s anti-Ukrainian dictates not only accelerated the tragedy but also dramatically increased the final death toll. The famine gave him an excuse to make war on the Ukrainians under the guise of protecting the Soviet state and advancing the proletariat cause. Instead of helping the struggling people of Ukraine he knowingly starved them.

The raw statistics are telling: of those who perished in the famine, fully 81 per cent were ethnic Ukrainians, while just over four per cent were Russians.

Any form of nationalism was brutally stamped out, as it threatened the USSR’s dominance. The Ukrainian cultural elite was virtually erased; villages were destroyed and the Ukrainian language was suppressed – and all to appease Stalin’s paranoia and quest for complete control.

REMEMBERING THE HOLODOMOR

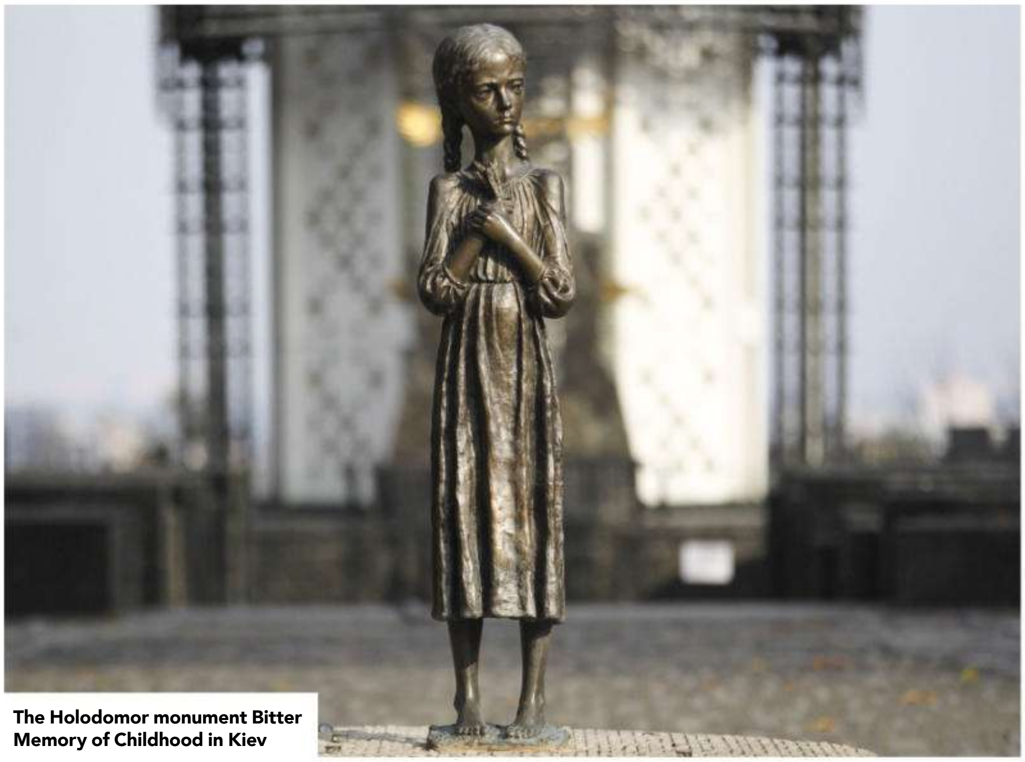
As debate over the causes of the Holodomor continues, the victims of the tragedy have not been forgotten

The first public memorial to the victims of the Holodomor was erected in Edmonton in Alberta, Canada, in 1983. Since then a number of other countries have established monuments marking the tragedy, which is officially commemorated on the fourth Saturday of each November. The largest of these monuments can be found in Kiev, where the Museum Memorial to Holodomor Victims opened on the banks of the Dnieper River in 2008.

In addition to exhibits and artefacts telling the story of the famine, the complex includes a subterranean Hall of Memory, approached along a walk flanked by two statues of weeping angels. Twenty-four Stones of Destiny form a circle of remembrance, representing life and the fact that, during the worst of the crisis, up to 24,000 Ukrainians perished every 24 hours.

Perhaps the most poignant of the memorials is a statue, Bitter Memory of Childhood: her hands clutch sheaves of wheat, face gaunt, as her hollow eyes gaze out in perpetual mourning for the millions of children who perished in the famine.

The Museum Memorial to Holodomor Victims on the banks of the Dnieper River in Kiev



The Holodomor monument Bitter Memory of Childhood in Kiev

Propaganda poster: "Grain to the State!"

Soviet literary giants challenged the supremacy of the communist regime

7 GREAT SOVIET WRITERS

WRITTEN BY MICHAEL E. HASKEW

In the Soviet Union, literature was intended as another tool for the advancement of socialism and propaganda, a useful instrument in the progress of the state and the cultivation of its utopian image both inwardly and to the rest of the world. But there were those who risked their very lives and livelihoods to examine Soviet society and its worldview. They held a mirror before the government, and even the harshest of totalitarian bureaucrats often cringed at the prospect of its raw, unvarnished perspective. Through prose and poetry, social commentary and vivid descriptions of personal trials, the voices of literary giants of the Soviet era were never stilled. Whether sentenced to the Gulag or expelled from their homeland, they continued to write and respond to the human experience that was life in the Soviet Union. From the early days of the Soviet regime to the post-Stalin era and the modern period, these seven writers evoked the enmity of their government but demonstrated a commitment to the exploration of truth, repression and human rights.

ANNA AKHMATOVA

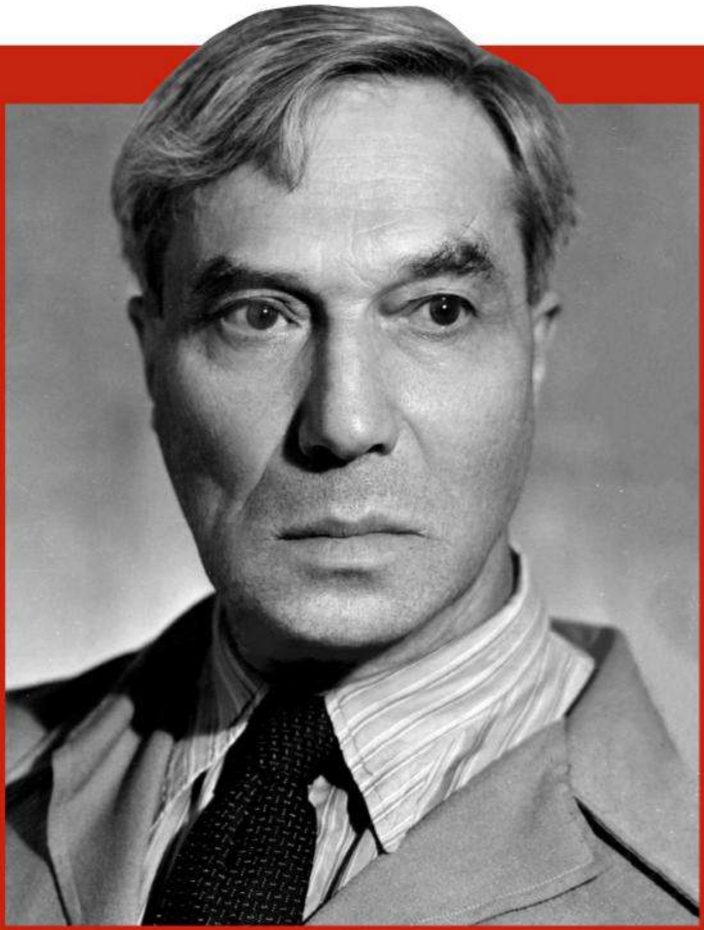
1889–1966

A writer from the tender age of 11, Anna Akhmatova is recognised as the premiere female poet of Russian and Soviet literature. Writing as a founding member of the Acmeist school, stressing the importance of 'beautiful clarity', her early work was recognised for its emotion, evocative nature and reference to archetypal themes such as love and the nature of God. With the revolution of 1917, Akhmatova broadened her perspective to include patriotic and civic topics but retained her own views on critical matters. She was denounced as "bourgeois and aristocratic" and endured a period of imposed silence until the eve of World War II. Emerging again during the conflict, she inspired the besieged people of Leningrad with a patriotic radio address in 1941 and read her works to wounded soldiers in hospitals after evacuation to Tashkent during the Nazi invasion. After the war, her latest works were denounced by the Communist Party as "alien" to the Soviet people, and her later poetic praise of Stalin was a thinly veiled attempt to rescue her son, arrested and exiled to Siberia at the time. During her later years, Akhmatova saw a resurgence of her work's popularity and received an honorary doctorate from the University of Oxford.

BORIS PASTERNAK

1890–1960

Author of the acclaimed novel *Doctor Zhivago,* Boris Pasternak is perhaps the writer of the Soviet era who is best known in the West, particularly since the novel was produced as a major motion picture. Pasternak was an early advocate of the revolution of 1917 and saw the Bolshevik uprising as a natural progression of history. He achieved fame as a poet, working in a progressive and avant-garde style when compared to Russian tradition. Pasternak portrayed early Soviet leaders as men of strong will and passion, however, he remained reserved and objective. He perceived a relaxation of restrictions on the press in the early years of Stalin's rule, but by the mid-1930s he refused to sign an acknowledgement calling for executions of those convicted in sham trials during the Soviet strongman's reign of terror. *Doctor Zhivago* was completed in 1955 and read widely in the West, although it was banned and available only on a clandestine basis in the Soviet Union. Pasternak was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1958, triggering a wave of retribution in his homeland. After accepting the award, threats of reprisal caused him to subsequently decline it. He spent his last years in virtual exile in Peredelkino southwest of Moscow, expelled from the Union of Soviet Writers. *Doctor Zhivago* was published in the Soviet Union in 1988.



© Alamy, Getty Images

VASILY GROSSMAN

1905-1964

A chemical engineer by trade, Grossman changed careers in the mid-1930s and began writing collections of short stories that were well received despite his family's connection to the communist Menshevik faction that had once severed its formal association with the Bolshevik movement. Grossman was born into a Jewish family in Ukraine and became one of the best-known correspondents of World War II on the Eastern Front, writing for *Red Star*, the army's newspaper. He witnessed several major battles, including those around Moscow, Stalingrad, Kursk and Berlin. His account of the horrors perpetrated by the Nazis at the Treblinka death camp was used as evidence for the prosecution at the Nuremberg Trials. Although his support of the Soviet regime had been steadfast, the suppression of the so-called *Black Book*, a compilation of documented atrocities against Jews during the war, caused Grossman to question his loyalties and to author several works that condemned the totalitarian Soviet regime. Criticisms of collectivisation and other commentary led to the seizure of manuscripts, notes and even typewriter ribbons related to his semi-autobiographical novel *Life and Fate*, which was not published in Russian until 1980, and only then thanks in part to the efforts of a group of Soviet dissidents including famed physicist Andrei Sakharov.

VARLAM SHALAMOV

1907-1982

Using stark and unembellished narrative, Varlam Shalamov wrote of the bleak existence in the Gulag labour camp system during the Stalin era. His first brush with the Soviet Government led to a two-year prison sentence in the Ural Mountains in the 1920s after being labelled a counter-revolutionary while he studied law at Moscow State University. However, upon his return to Moscow in 1932, Shalamov remained active as a journalist. Five years later he was arrested ostensibly for supporting expatriate Nobel Prize recipient Ivan Bunin, having called Bunin "a great Russian writer." Shalamov spent 17 more years in labour camps and was released in the 1950s. After Stalin's death, his collections of poetry gained praise, but by the 1970s a crackdown on dissent forced him to write a denunciation of the publication of his work in the West. He was dependent on the Soviet Writers' Union for his livelihood and was coerced into issuing the statement. Shalamov's seminal work, *Kolyma Stories*, is a collection of short essays, glimpses and perspectives on the degradation of life in the Gulag. Volumes of his poetry were released after his death, and *Kolyma Stories* was published for the first time in the Soviet Union in 1989.

ALEKSANDR SOLZHENITSYN

1918–2008

A recipient of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1970, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn at first declined to go to Stockholm to accept the prestigious recognition, fearing that he would not be allowed to return to the Soviet Union. Best known for his acclaimed work *The Gulag Archipelago*, Solzhenitsyn presented to the world historical and literary perspectives on the harsh realities of the Soviet prison and labour camp system, documenting its decades of growth through the brutal dictatorship of Stalin in the 1950s. Solzhenitsyn appeared on the world stage in the early 1960s with the publication of his short novel *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*. The narrative, based on Solzhenitsyn's own experience as a political prisoner, became an instant sensation. Excerpts of *The Gulag Archipelago* were first published in France in 1973, and the Soviet Government's repressive response against the author was immediate. He was arrested for treason a year later and exiled from the Soviet Union. He settled in the United States but returned to Russia in 1994 when his exile was rescinded. Among Solzhenitsyn's numerous other notable works are *The First Circle*, describing his experience as a mathematician while in captivity, and *August 1914*, a historical novel surrounding the momentous Russian defeat at the Battle of Tannenberg in World War I.

BELLA AKHMADULINA

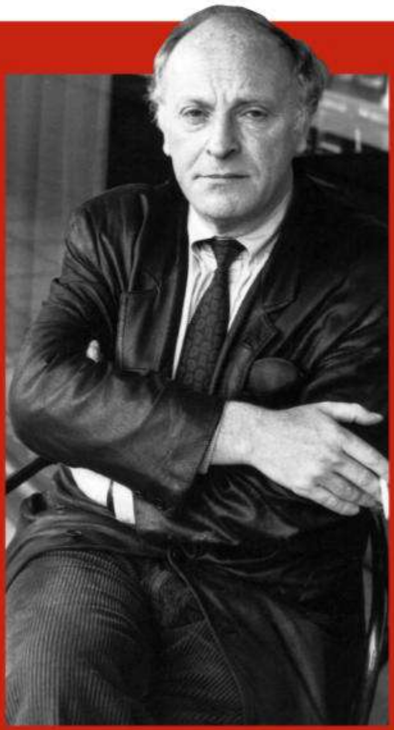
1937–2010

During the post-Stalin era and the period sometimes referred to as the 'Khrushchev Thaw', a flowering of arts and culture blossomed for a time in the Soviet Union. At its forefront was the poet Bella Akhmadulina, who wrote in an individualistic style and found the exploration of varied themes such as love, interpersonal relationships and friendship inspirational. Born in Moscow, she began her literary career at a young age while working for a newspaper in the Soviet capital. A graduate of the Maxim Gorky Literature Institute, her early poetry was published in 1955 with the approval of a group of established poets. Although she refrained from direct criticism of the Soviet Government in her work, Akhmadulina was an outspoken critic of the harsh treatment of Boris Pasternak, suffering retribution because of it. She also took exception to the treatment of dissidents Andrei Sakharov and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. Although she was punished for such views, her poetry and other works were popularly embraced in the Soviet Union. She was married to famed poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko during the 1950s and in later years made many public appearances before sell-out crowds numbering in the thousands. She received the State Prize of the Soviet Union in 1989 and the State Prize of the Russian Federation in 2004. After her death in 2010, both Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin and President Dmitry Medvedev praised her legacy.

JOSEPH BRODSKY

1940–1996

'Social parasitism' was the charge that sent poet Joseph Brodsky to prison on a five-year sentence in 1964. Only after other prominent literary figures in the Soviet Union protested was his sentence reduced and his release secured the following year. Brodsky had begun to write poetry at 15 and drew the attention of others in the Leningrad writing circle. Unfortunately, his sporadic employment and independent character had brought his conduct to the unfavourable attention of the authorities. He did not learn his lesson and was exiled from the Soviet Union in 1972. Brodsky spent the rest of his life in the United States and became a naturalised citizen in 1977, continuing to produce critically acclaimed poetry, some of which was published after his untimely death at 56. While he did not directly denounce the Soviet Government, Brodsky's themes of individualism and nonconformity were disturbing to the regime, while his perspectives on the human condition and the meaning of life resonated with the public. Brodsky served as poet in residence at the University of Michigan, as a professor of literature at Mount Holyoke College in Massachusetts, and as a visiting professor with other academic institutions. He received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1987 and was Poet Laureate of the United States from 1991–1992.



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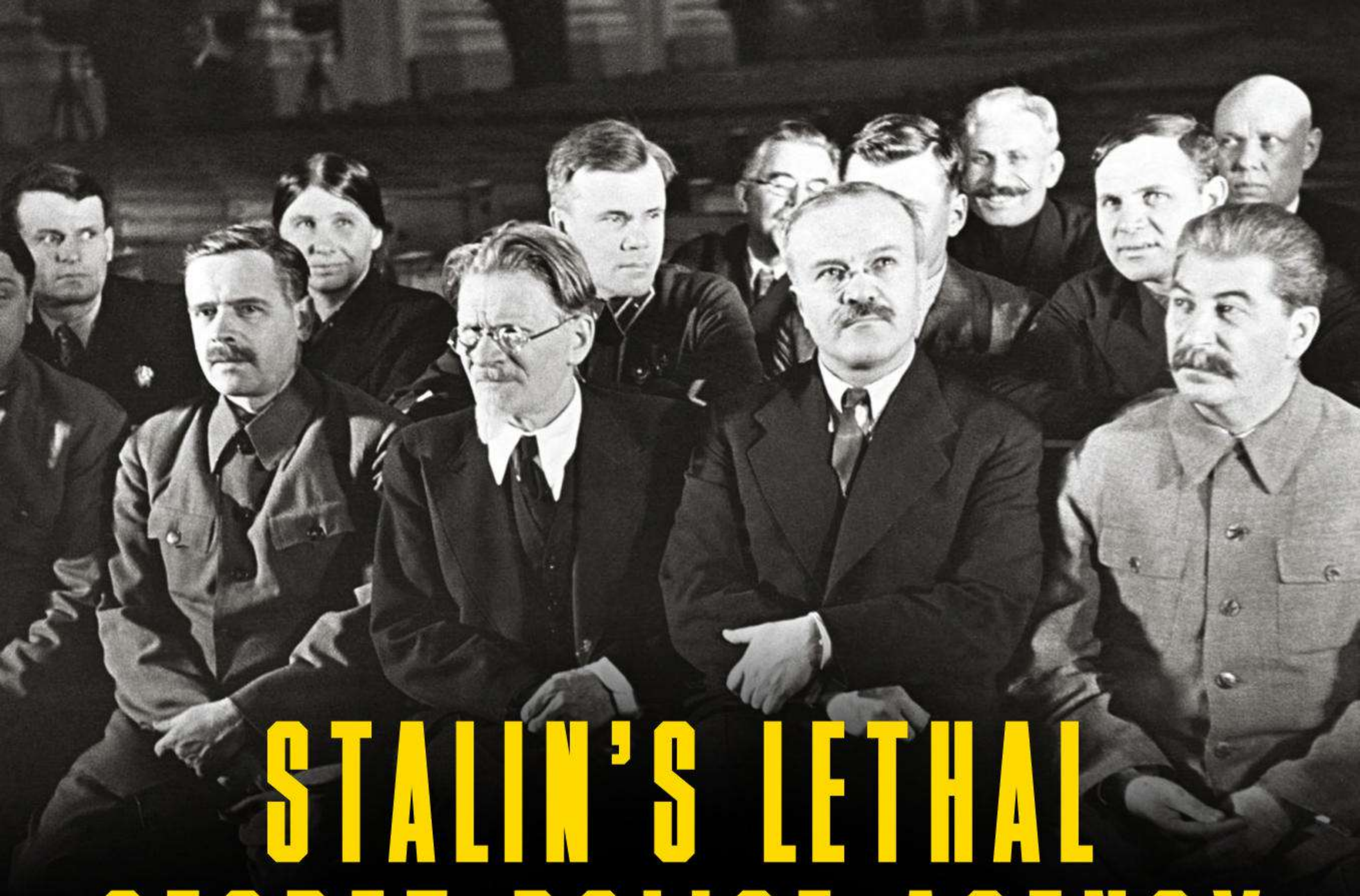


STALIN'S LETHAL SECRET POLICE AGENCY

Like other brutal and repressive dictators, Stalin relied on a merciless police force to ensure nobody threatened his rule

WRITTEN BY JOANNA ELPHICK

Russia's history is the tale of a landscape routinely drenched in blood, shed through centuries of political violence and the inhumane treatment of its people. Opponents to the ruler of the day, be it Peter the Great, Ivan the Terrible or Vladimir Lenin, were identified and systematically removed in order to ensure total control through the use of secret police. Each leader learnt from his predecessors, choosing the most effective techniques to quell his rivals until, during the brutal rule of Joseph Stalin, a series of deadly state security agencies were developed and unleashed upon an already whipped country.

Stalin perfected the fine art of terror using a series of ruthless organisations, initially adopting Lenin's infamous Cheka but gradually creating his own instruments of repression. The Vecheka (Cheka for short), the 'All-Russian Extraordinary Committee to Combat Counter-Revolution and Sabotage', under the cruel gaze of Felix Dzerzhinsky, set the wheels in motion for the establishment of a savage police force. Known by Lenin as his 'special apparatus', it was designed to eliminate all 'class enemies'.

On 6 February 1922, the Cheka morphed into the GPU, but it quickly changed once again into the OGPU, the 'Joint State Political Directorate', in 1923. Stalin used them to round up and deport the kulaks ('tight-fisted'), a class of land-owning peasants who remained a major thorn in his side, and to oversee the infamous Gulags. A number of key players were placed in charge of the Corrective Labour Camps, but one, Genrikh Yagoda, would outlive the OGPU and rise further up the blood-soaked pole to power.

The OGPU had been a highly effective tool in the clearing away of Kulaks and the implementation of the Gulags, but Stalin was still not satisfied. While the problems further afield were being controlled, serious issues closer to home were being overlooked. Someone was needed to quash any potential uprisings occurring under their noses that had, up until then, been ignored. It was at this point Stalin decided to create his greatest and most terrifying state security agency, the lethal NKVD, or 'People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs'. If life for the Russian people had been difficult under the OGPU, it was to get infinitely worse under this new regime.

The NKVD unified all forms of militia and the general police force into one all-powerful unit. This included the Special Sessions, an agency with vast judicial functions that dealt with suspected terrorists and revolutionaries without the need for witnesses. Literally a law unto itself, the Special Sessions were feared by anyone unlucky enough

to fall foul of Stalin. The NKVD combined all the vicious tactics of previous secret organisations with a wide array of new powers that crushed any opposition brave – or stupid – enough to raise its head in protest.

One such protester was Sergei Kostrikov, or Kirov, a once adored protégé of Stalin who simply disagreed with his leader and refused to back down. The younger, charismatic Kirov impressed the people and quickly became a rival to the leadership. Such impudence needed eradicating, and the NKVD was the perfect instrument for the job. Stalin had been deeply impressed by Genrikh Yagoda's work during his time overseeing the Corrective Labour Camps and was quick to appoint his heartless acolyte as head of the NKVD. Here was a man who fully embraced his leader's violent methods, claiming that "the only way of dealing with Kulaks was with bullets."

Born on 7 November 1891 into a good Jewish family, Yagoda was an exceptional social climber, working his way up through the ranks of the Cheka, OGPU and finally the leadership of the NKVD. He carried out his orders with positive glee, dispatching traitors, spies and enemies of the state without a second thought. His first task as head of Stalin's new and evolved secret police force was to remove Kirov and to somehow sweep away the former leaders of the opposition. Yagoda was happy to oblige. Stalin may or may not have directly instigated the murder of Kirov, but he certainly benefited from such an event.

A vulnerable individual by the name of Leonid Nikolayev was chosen to assassinate Kirov with a pistol and, when his second attempt at the job was successful, Yagoda swooped in to interrogate the easily manipulated boy. After a prolonged period in which Nikolayev was severely tortured, he signed a statement claiming that leaders of the opposition, Zinoviev, Kamenev and Smirnov, were behind the assassination. When the accused men refused to confess to the crime, Stalin proceeded to issue the NKVD with new and even more terrifying powers of persuasion.

On 8 April 1935, a new law was enacted allowing children as young as 12 years of age who were found guilty of crimes against the government to be punished in the same manner as an adult. This included the death penalty. If anyone refused to sign a confession statement the NKVD merely suggested that their children should be brought in for questioning – the dissident would almost always surrender immediately.

Further decrees were hastily drafted issuing yet more controls and capabilities to the influential secret police. Those committing terrorist acts were to be dealt with 'in an accelerated way' by the NKVD without the use of the judiciary, who might slow things up with irritating formalities such as lengthy appeal hearings. Death sentences would no longer be under the jurisdiction of the judges. Yagoda would oversee the execution as soon as the court had pronounced its sentence. Stalin's new law was a devastating blow to justice, one that stipulated that cases were to be "heard with no participation by other parties. No appeals for quashing the verdict or for mercy will be allowed. The death sentence is to be carried out as soon as it has been pronounced."

Kamenev and Zinoviev were the first to fall under this new decree. Both were taken out and executed straight away. The promise given by Stalin to Kamenev before his confession regarding the safety of his two sons was a blatant lie and the boys were shot a short time later.

The NKVD now appeared to be an unstoppable juggernaut of violence, torture, oppression and cruelty, clearing the way for Stalin with a brutal ruthlessness never seen before. The leader's paranoia had been inflamed by rumours of potential takeovers, and the guilty verdict pronounced upon Zinoviev, Kamenev and 14 other supposed dissidents was the final straw, instigating the now infamous Great Purge.

The court case in 1936 was the first of three media-based farces known as the 'Show Trials'. Both prosecution and defence counsel speeches were delivered under the hot glare of a series of well-positioned spotlights and broadcasted to the nation. The foreign press, admitted into the courtroom to prove to the world that USSR was both fair and just in its dealings with terrorists, remained highly sceptical of the constant stream of willing confessions. No one appeared prepared to fight against their accusers, with all of them readily admitting to their crimes.

Hatch-cut cell doors line the many corridors on six floors at Lubyanka prison

STALIN'S PIT BULL

In his sharp suit, shiny shoes and little round spectacles, Stalin's favourite state prosecutor may have appeared the picture of legal respectability, but looks could be deceiving

Andrei Vyshinsky was born in 1883 to a wealthy family in Odessa. He was an intelligent boy, studying at the University of Kiev before joining the Social Democratic Party. His aptitude for the law opened doors for him, and it was not long before he had become professor of law and then rector at the University of Moscow. However, Vyshinsky's unforgiving character suited a career in the courtroom far more than the classroom.

His attitude towards defendants made him popular with the NKVD, who watched on with amusement as he played with the accused like a cat toying with a terrified mouse. When Vyshinsky became chief prosecutor he ensured that his dubious tactics were successful, claiming that "confession is a queen over all sorts of evidence."

Such a sentiment was music to the NKVD's ears, and he was therefore an obvious choice as lead prosecutor during the infamous Show Trials, where he faced the cameras and took centre stage. His verbal sparring tied the opposition in knots, leaving the judges in no doubt as to his expectations. During the trial of Zinoviev and Kamenev he announced, "I demand that dogs gone mad should be shot."

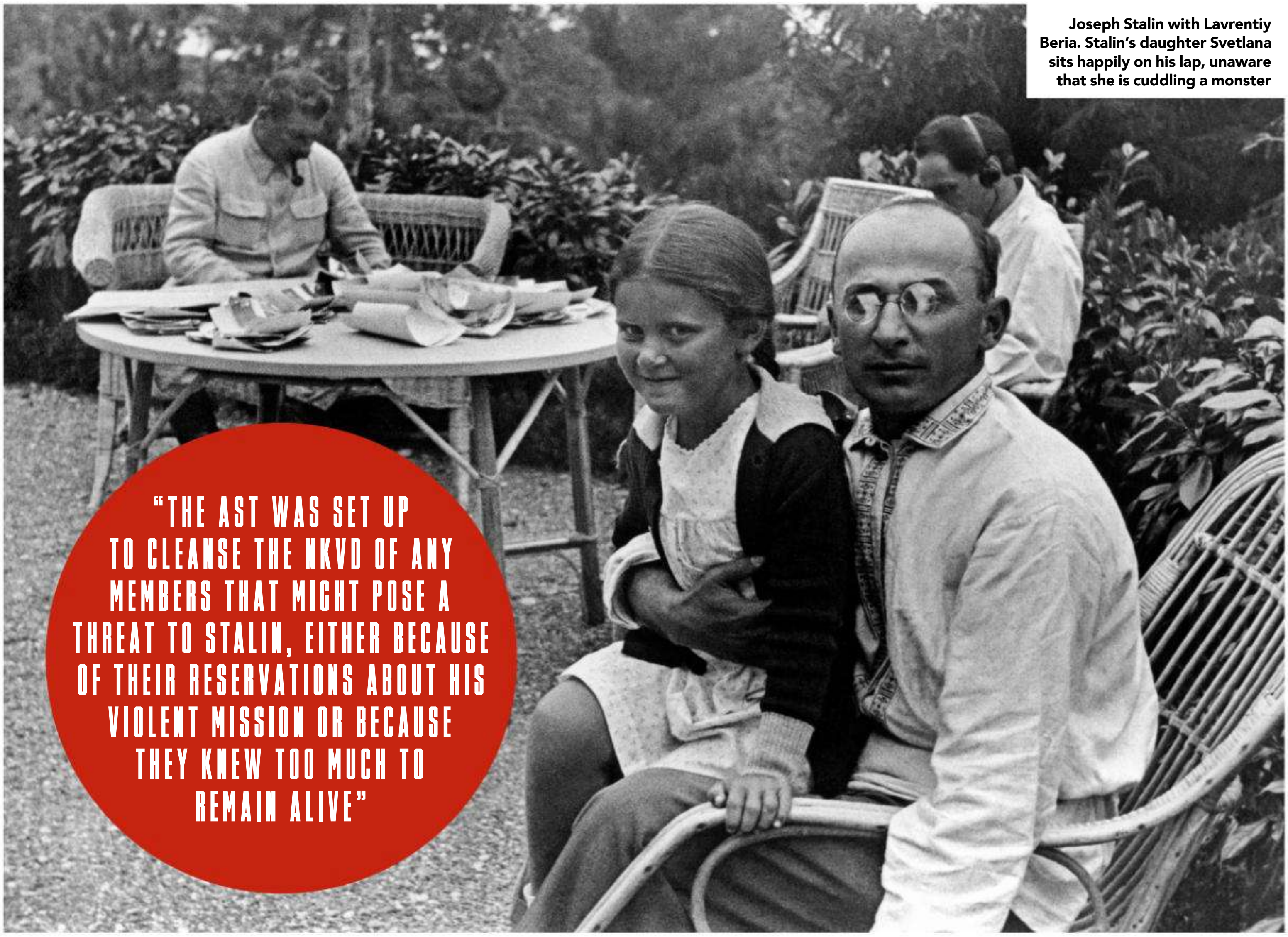
After the war he became foreign minister, representing the Soviet Union at the United Nations before dying of natural causes in 1954.

1937 heralded the second theatrical court hearing. This time, 17 men were accused of working alongside Japan and Germany in an implausible bid to destroy the Soviet Government. Once again evidence was bountiful (ludicrously so), wheeled into the courtroom on little carts or carried in by staggering clerks of the court, all under the gaze of the world's media. Confessions followed and were swiftly accompanied by hastily carried out executions. 'Justice' was indeed a smooth-running operation in Mother Russia.

No one, it seemed, was safe from the NKVD – not even NKVD members. Yagoda, the leader of this hostile secret police, had displeased Stalin since he had failed to gather enough evidence against Nikolai Bukharin, the editor of the official government newspaper. His scepticism over Stalin's long-term plans had reached the ear of the leader and he had subsequently raced to the top of the dissident hit list. Unfortunately, acquiring evidence to prove this was near impossible and Stalin was greatly unimpressed with Yagoda's sudden ineptitude.

By the time of the third Show Trial, not only was Bukharin dragged before the court, but also Yagoda himself. Trumped-up charges against the former leader included the assassination of his predecessor Menzhinsky, failing to gather evidence against Bukharin due to his secret allegiance to the enemy of the state, failing to protect Kirov, and, finally, working with the Polish, German and Japanese secret intelligence organisations. This dramatic fall from grace was rounded off with a bullet in the back of his head, followed by the execution of his wife, Lili, for good measure. This led to a tempting new job opportunity, and Stalin had just the right man in mind for the role.

At a mere five feet tall and with a crippled leg, Nikolai Yezhov had much to prove. Born in St Petersburg on 1 May 1895, the semi-illiterate tailor's assistant joined the Russian Army in 1915, fighting on the Eastern Front. Following the February Revolution he joined the Bolsheviks and became a member of the Red Army during the civil war. Having somehow wormed his way into Stalin's inner circle, Yezhov, who was known as 'the



Joseph Stalin with Lavrentiy Beria. Stalin's daughter Svetlana sits happily on his lap, unaware that she is cuddling a monster

> "THE AST WAS SET UP TO CLEANSE THE NKVD OF ANY MEMBERS THAT MIGHT POSE A THREAT TO STALIN, EITHER BECAUSE OF THEIR RESERVATIONS ABOUT HIS VIOLENT MISSION OR BECAUSE THEY KNEW TOO MUCH TO REMAIN ALIVE"

dwarf', was ultimately given the task of creating a new department within the NKVD entitled the Administration of Special Tasks, or AST.

By December 1936 the AST was fully operational, consisting of 300 of Yezhov's most reliable comrades, who would do his bidding without questioning the motives. Stalin couldn't have chosen a better man for the job. Yezhov was utterly loyal, extremely hardworking and completely lacking in any moral fibre. If Stalin required a task to be carried out, he would undertake the challenge no matter how repugnant or abhorrent the outcome. As the Great Purge raged on, Nikolai Yezhov became the poster boy for the NKVD's terrifying tactics.

The AST was set up to cleanse the NKVD of any members that might pose a threat to Stalin, either because of their reservations about his violent mission or because they knew too much to remain alive. Potential defectors were tracked down by a secret group working within the AST.

High-ranking intelligence officers working abroad were beginning to panic, particularly after the seemingly untouchable Yagoda had been arrested. During the summer of 1937 many officers were called back to the Soviet Union and, under Yezhov's watchful eye, summarily executed. Those who attempted to defect were hunted down and made an example of. Boxes of chocolates laced with strychnine were sent to their wives and children. Meanwhile, other previously healthy NKVD veterans started having 'heart attacks'. The Communist Party may have initially made disparaging comments regarding the 'little dwarf', but by 1938 nobody was laughing at Stalin's tyrannous sidekick.

Deaths in the Gulags soared and the tactics used by the NKVD rapidly became more and more depraved. Prisoners were kept in windowless cells under blazing electric lights that remained burning throughout their ordeal. Each man was made to stand beneath the glaring lights without the opportunity to sit, let alone sleep. Such intolerable sleep deprivation, along with periods of starvation, ensured that they became disorientated and desperate. If this tactic failed to make the prisoner compliant, confessions were quickly obtained via brutal beatings with weighty truncheons. It is estimated that 1.3 million people were arrested that year and over 681,000 were subsequently shot. Yezhov moved away from the Lubyanka, choosing instead to have an abattoir built for his numerous executions. Logs were used to muffle the sound of bullets hitting the wall and hoses were installed to wash away the rivers of blood. To avoid an unhealthy build-up the corpses were promptly cremated.

The German Nazi Party watched the bloodshed with great interest. They were well aware of Stalin's growing paranoia and decided to use it to their advantage, slipping 32 forged documents into his hands. The papers 'proved' that the Soviet leader's own Red Army was plotting against him and, as expected, Yezhov was sent in to root out and punish the disloyal commanders. Approximately 35,000 Soviet soldiers were either banished or shot, although there is some debate about just how important the forgeries were given the Soviet authorities relied heavily on 'confessions'.

Fear now surrounded the entire population, and everyone from Stalin himself down to the lowest street worker lived under a toxic cloud of suspicion. The NKVD had infiltrated everywhere, and the slightest suggestion of criticism more often than not ended in death. Such an oppressive atmosphere eventually began to affect morale, and Stalin realised that it was time to rein in the violence, at least for a while. Yezhov had served his master well, but he had become exhausted and began to drink heavily. It was decided that a deputy commissar was required to help him run the NKVD, ostensibly to ease the burden, but in reality he had outlived his usefulness and Stalin wanted Yezhov out.

Understandably, Yezhov panicked. Stalin had chosen Lavrentiy Beria, a deeply unpopular and dangerous man, to support him in the day-to-day running of the NKVD, but Beria had no intention of playing second fiddle to anyone, especially a drunken washed-up has been. Here was an ambitious supporter of Stalin's schemes, a slippery and cruel character who had already dispatched one of his former rivals.

Beria was born on 29 March 1899 in Abkhazia to a deeply religious mother. Although he later claimed to be very close to her, his mother's teachings clearly didn't hamper the young psychopath's murderous proclivities.

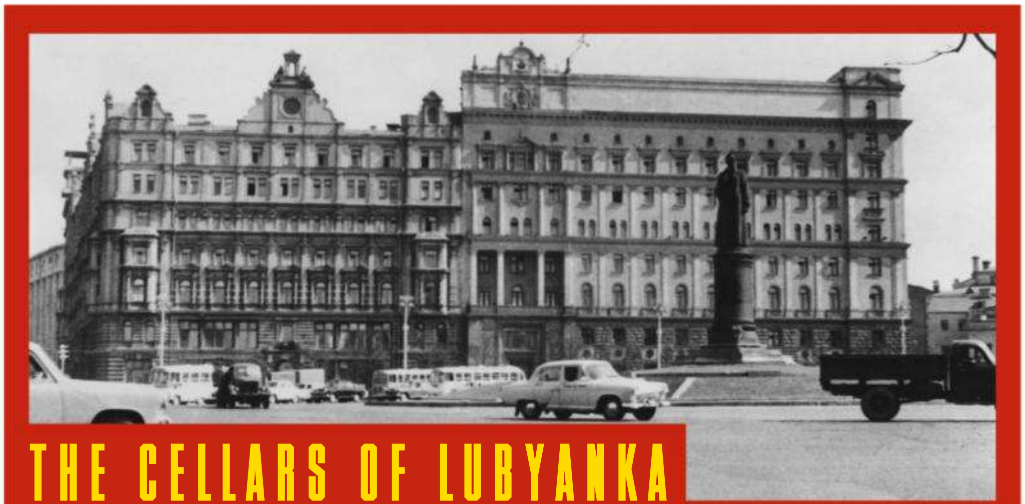
Yezhov, the hunter of dissidents, had overnight become the hunted, and the pressure proved too much. Having engaged in one-night stands with common prostitutes and dangerous homosexual trysts, he began to unravel, giving Beria the ammunition he needed. Stalin's former executioner was arrested on 10 April 1939, and, having undergone extraordinary sessions of torture, confessed to being homosexual and therefore an enemy of the state. He was executed along with 345 other irritating flies in Stalin's ointment at the hands of those who had previously worked for him.

Beria was a ruthless monster, heartily despised by his own NKVD officers. He was considered to be merciless even by their barbarous standards, and his sexual appetite was infamous. Under cover of darkness, the new leader of the NKVD had his driver cruise the streets looking for women. When one caught his eye, the driver was ordered to park the limousine, follow the girl on foot and, when the time was right, grab her and throw her in the back seat, where Beria waited like a spider in its web. The terrified woman was then repeatedly raped before being thrown out of the car.

However, Stalin needed the Soviet people to calm down and Beria was ordered to, at least on the surface, give the impression of respectability and reasonableness. He showed the people exactly what they longed for, a witty, intelligent official, a kind father and a loving husband. The sadist was only revealed to those suspected dissidents unfortunate enough to catch his attention.

Reforms were put in place, such as a series of new police procedures publicly suggesting that

A former Gulag in Pevek, Russia, acts as a grim reminder of the NKVD's deportation mission



THE CELLARS OF LUBYANKA

At the heart of Moscow, in Lubyanka Square, stood a structure that became the most infamous building in all of Russia

Built in 1897 for the All Russia Insurance Company, Lubyanka became the HQ of the NKVD, the official centre of all their operations after the October Revolution. While NKVD chiefs took their offices on the luxurious third floor, nestled deep within the bowels of the building was the infamous torture chamber, where many dissidents were 'processed' and forced into signing false confessions.

The edifice comprised of three separate buildings, but it was the central block, painted a sunny yellow, that terrified the people, for it was here that Lubyanka Prison was situated. Cells lined the forbidding corridors, but inmates were rarely there for any length of time since most ended up in the basement or sent off to the Gulags. The prison itself was eerily silent since guards were ordered not to speak to the inmates. In order to communicate with one another in the darkness they were taught to click their tongues in a grotesque form of Morse code.

This unnerving noise and the sound of their boots tapping across the floors was the only warning the prisoners were given that the guards were on their way.

SECCION MEDICA
LOS SERVICIOS, EXAMENES
Y CERTIFICADOS MEDICOS
SON GRATUITOS

Newspapers released images of the ice pick used by NKVD agent Ramón Mercader to kill Leon Trotsky

Along with being charged as a German agent, Yagoda was also accused of corruption and diamond smuggling

the terror was finally over. It wasn't. Public trials, of which there were very few, were open and transparent, with carefully prepared evidence, but behind the scenes the violence raged on. In fact, under its new leader the NKVD was more brutal and unforgiving. Beria took pride in carrying out his own torture claiming, "Let me have one night with him and I'll have him confessing he's the King of England."

Having been personally interrogated by Beria with his favourite torture weapons, the blackjack and the truncheon, Marshal Vasily Blyukher staggered to Lubyanka with a blood clot in his lung and his abdominal organs mashed beyond recognition. He had also been blinded in one eye. Such interrogations went on for several days, and if the prisoner was brave enough to withstand the ordeal, their family, including any children, were often brought in for questioning. This final tactic proved to be a highly effective at crushing the spirit, and confessions usually followed.

The NKVD had grown exponentially, both physically in the number of members working within its shady force and in its enormous, far-reaching powers. This pitiless secret police agency could easily touch those seemingly out of harm's way. Rudolf Klement, a Trotskyist based in France, was found decapitated floating in the Seine, while other enemies of the state were discovered and eliminated as far away as Switzerland. Of course, it was Leon Trotsky that Beria was truly after.

The NKVD undertook various elaborate attempts upon his life, and on 20 August 1940, it succeeded. Ramón Mercader, a staunch supporter of Stalin, smashed an ice pick into Trotsky's skull during an attack in Trotsky's study at his home in Mexico. Despite being mortally wounded, Trotsky fought for his life, breaking Mercader's hand before stopping his bodyguards from beating his assailant to death, insisting he be made to answer questions. Trotsky died the next day.

At last all 15 leading figures implicated in the Russian Revolution were dead, with the exception of Joseph Stalin. Four had died under suspicious circumstances, while the remaining ten had been systematically executed.

Beria was hailed a hero. Having joined the Central Committee of the Communist Party, he became deputy prime minister in 1941. The NKVD carried on his bloody work, and the impending war meant that the mass deportation of 'enemies' was increased. Any potential threat to the security of the USSR was forcibly removed through use of the NKVD troikas, or threesomes, who dealt with extrajudicial punishment. Those poor souls who were not executed straight away were transported under diabolical conditions, which often resulted in a slow, lingering death.

With the German attack on the Soviet Union in 1941, Stalin's pathological hatred turned towards anyone with Germanic connections. Ethnic cleansing of the Volga Germans was swift and merciless. No minority group was safe from the xenophobic leader: Ukrainians, Poles, Crimean Tartars, Greeks, Turks and Latvians all fell under the terrifying efficiency of the NKVD. Mistakes were not to be tolerated.

When one of Beria's men discovered that he had missed a small village of Tartars, he feared that his leader would punish him. In a blind panic he gathered the remaining villagers, comprising of women and children, and had them herded onto a large boat and sailed out onto the Azov Sea. He then ordered it to be sunk.

By 1943, the role of the NKVD had changed. Beria began using his men in a covert operation to infiltrate all levels of the Red Army in order to root out "traitors, deserters and cowards". The following year over 300,000 former Soviet POW's were vetted and 36,000 arrested. The justification for this crackdown was simply that the men hauled in for questioning might be hostile to the state. Heroes such as Mikhail Devyataev, who had fought bravely before being captured by the Germans, escaped only to be arrested by the NKVD and marched to a Gulag. Their misuse of power was staggering, but more atrocities were to send shock waves around the world when the Germans made a sickening discovery.

Fifteen thousand Polish POW's had been rounded up by the NKVD back in 1940, but it was unknown where they had been moved to. Polish generals had asked a direct question as to their whereabouts but the answer had been unsatisfactorily vague. The Soviet Union simply denied knowledge of their location, claiming that they had freed themselves and had subsequently run off into the forests.

Three years later, a Nazi troop marching near Smolensk stumbled across a series of mass graves in the Katyn Forest. 4,000 bodies were discovered, including almost half the Polish officer corps, each with his hands tied behind his back. Having carried out autopsies, German doctors established that they had been coldly shot in the back of the head before being dumped into giant pits. The executions had probably been carried out at a secret abattoir owned by the NKVD in Smolensk and the bodies transported by trucks to the forest. Both American and British POW's were dragged to the site to witness the war crime and to then report back to their respective countries. The world was horrified, but media manipulation on the part of the Soviet Union saw to it that the Germans were blamed and the NKVD remained safely in the shadows. It was not until 1992 that a tearful Boris Yeltsin, on behalf of Russia, admitted to the massacre and publicly apologised to Poland.

As WWII drew to an end the terrifying NKVD was required to shapeshift once again. Beria remained in charge of security, but the organisation itself was now given ministerial status. The secret police agency was renamed the Soviet Ministry of State Security, or MGB, a far subtler force than its predecessor.

With the death of Stalin in 1953, Beria made a bold move to take control. It was a fatal mistake. He had few allies, and those who despise him had no intention of letting him snatch any more power. On 26 June 1953, he was arrested on charges of treason. After a spell of incarceration followed by a trial, he was shot, but not before falling to his knees and begging for his life.

Other security organisations would follow, but none would be given the freedom awarded to the most infamous of secret police. The time of the NKVD was finally at an end.

The last of the Show Trials, known as the Trial of the Twenty-One, occurred in 1938 and included Nikolai Bukharin and Genrikh Yagoda

THE POISON LABORATORY

The covert research centre had one deadly goal and an endless supply of 'guinea pigs' to practice on

The NKVD ran a secret development facility with the sole purpose of creating an odourless, tasteless, undetectable chemical that could be used to dispatch enemies of the state without leaving any trace of their crimes behind.

The first laboratory, named the Special Office, was overseen by Ignatii Kazakov and then Genrikh Yagoda. However, by the time Lavrentiy Beria became leader, it had changed its name to Laboratory 1.

It was during this time that prisoners of both sexes, all ages and varying physical conditions who had been selected from the Gulags were subjected to a variety of lethal concoctions including ricin, curare, cyanide, digitoxin and mustard gas. Each starving victim was offered a drink and meal heavily laced with a little something extra for medicinal purposes. The patient was then observed for side-effects and the poison rated for the excruciating pain it caused. After death, the body was removed and an autopsy carried out to see if the chemical could be detected.

Eventually, to the delight of the NKVD, scientists developed the deadly K-2, comprising of carbylamine choline chloride. Having been ingested, the victim appeared to physically shrink and become extremely weak before falling silent and dying within 15 minutes.

LAND OF PLENTY

While the true toll of the Holodomor will never be known, most studies estimate that 3.9 million people were killed by Stalin's collectivisation drive. Despite 4,000 rebellions against the seizure of their grain, equipment and land, the farmers of Ukraine stood no chance against the secret police and Red Army troops sent to enforce the cruel policy. In 1932, 4.27 million tons of grain (enough to feed 12 million people for a year) were removed from Ukraine. At its peak, the Holodomor was claiming 28,000 souls a day, and by its end in 1933, 13.3 per cent of Ukraine's population had perished.

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The signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact in 1939

“THE SOVIETS BEGAN SECRET TALKS WITH THE GERMANS WHILE HOLDING DISCUSSIONS WITH BRITAIN AND FRANCE”

AN ALLIANCE WITH THE ENEMY

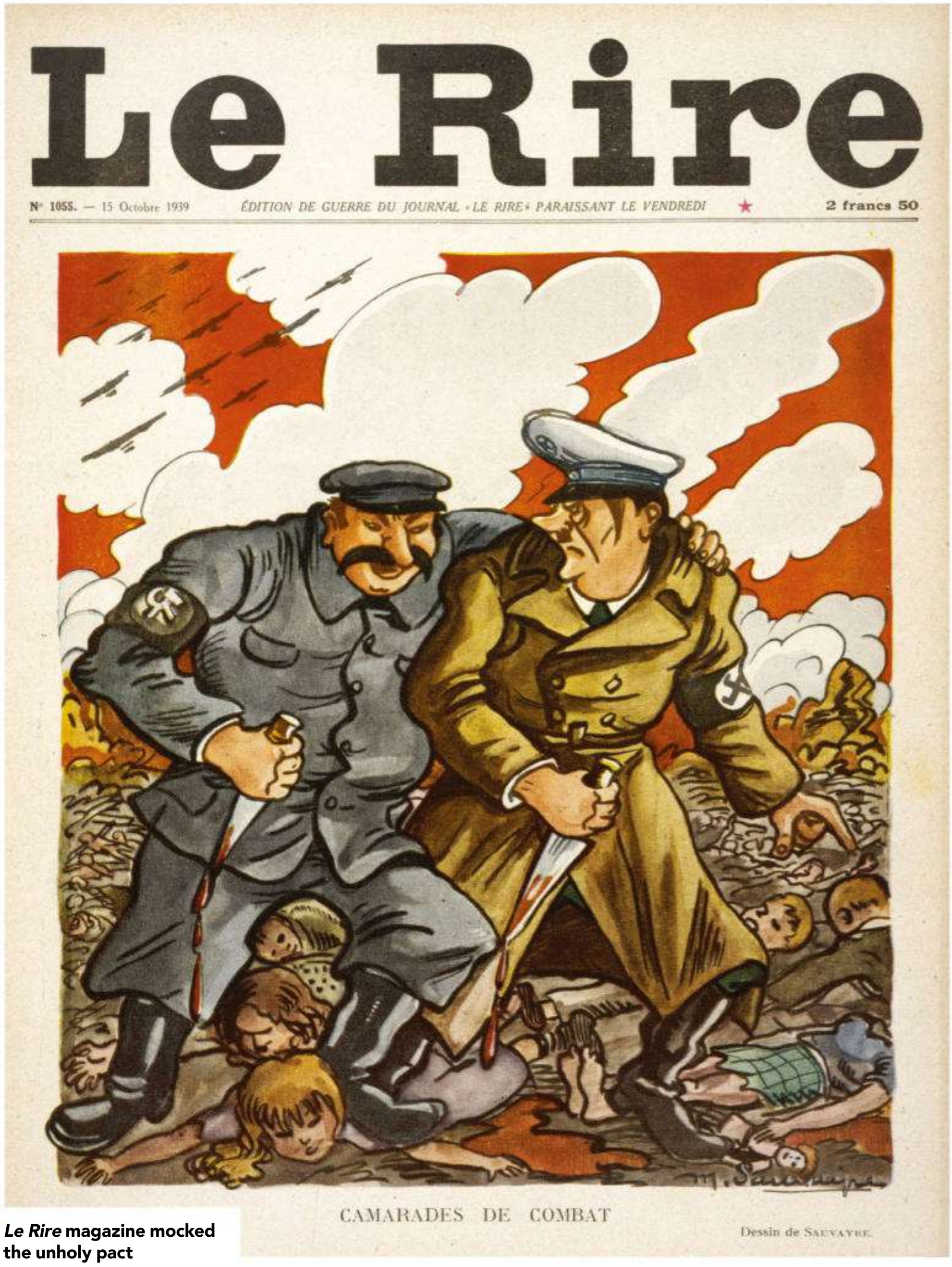
The Soviet Union was willing to side with anyone in its quest to survive the carnage of WWII

WRITTEN BY CHARLES GINGER

One of the most intriguing threads that ran throughout the course of WWII was the Soviet Union’s pragmatic ability to switch its alliances as events unfolded. It was a chameleonesque trait that would dramatically influence the course of the entire conflict.

As with many superpowers, the Soviet Union was born in the blood and ruin of war. In October 1917, Vladimir Lenin’s Bolsheviks toppled the Russian Provisional Government, which had itself formed after the bloody overthrow of Tsar Nicholas II. The result of Lenin’s push for power was the formation of the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic (Russian SFSR) and a merciless civil war that is estimated to have claimed between 7 and 12 million lives.

Following the Red Army’s (Bolshevik) victory over the counter-revolutionary forces of the White Army in 1922 (minor battles did continue into 1923), the communists formed the Soviet Union by uniting the Russian, Transcaucasian (Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia), Ukrainian and Byelorussian republics. A mammoth


Le Rire
N° 1055. — 15 Octobre 1939
ÉDITION DE GUERRE DU JOURNAL «LE RIRE» PARAISSANT LE VENDREDI
2 francs 50
CAMARADES DE COMBAT
Dessin de Sauvayre.

***Le Rire* magazine mocked the unholy pact**

superstate was born, ruling over a population of approximately 160 to 170 million citizens, Iosif Vissarionovich Stalin, the son of Georgian peasants, its undisputed leader.

During Stalin's ruthless reign the Soviet Union's borders proved to be a contentious issue. The first major dispute occurred in 1935 as the relatively young state clashed with Japanese forces in the Chinese province of Manchuria. Preceded by numerous incidents where both Soviet and Japanese patrols accidentally (and occasionally intentionally) violated the borders of this occupied region, this was in fact the first occasion in which guns were fired, and it became known as the Halhamiao Incident.

A series of clashes occurred over the following years, culminating in the decisive defeat of Japanese forces at the Battle of Khalkin Gol in September 1939. Under the direction of Georgy Zhukov, the Red Army deployed tactics that would later prove invaluable in the fight against the German invasion. On 13 April 1941, the Soviet-Japanese Neutrality Pact was signed, finally putting an end to a war that was never formerly declared by either side.

Even before its eastern borders had been settled, the Soviet Union had turned its gaze westwards to Poland and the mighty German state beyond it. The existence of a Polish state had been a contentious issue for Russia as far back as the Napoleonic era. Despite Hitler openly stating in his book, *Mein Kampf*, that the living space (Lebensraum) that he believed Germany desperately needed lay in the East and could only be taken by invading the Soviet territories, Stalin could not resist the temptation of discussing the division of Poland with the Nazi Government.

In a sign of the duplicitous nature of his government, the Soviets began secret talks with Germany while holding simultaneous discussions with Britain and France. With military and diplomatic ties between Germany and the USSR all but severed, the deal adopted the guise of an economic agreement. As officials thrashed out its terms (a key one being a German loan of 200 million Reichsmarks to the USSR at an interest rate of 4.5 per cent) the French and British delegates arrived in Moscow to discuss military matters.

Fatefully for Poland, the talks fell apart due to Poland's refusal to allow Soviet troops to enter its territory in the event of a German attack. Their rebuttal was based on the very prescient assumption that once the Red Army crossed the border it would never leave. With an impasse reached on 21 August, Stalin decided to act quickly, hoping to conclude dealings with Germany. On 23 August, the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was signed, named after the foreign ministers of both countries, Joachim von Ribbentrop and Vyacheslav Mikhaylovich Molotov.

Its main term dictated that Poland was to be partitioned between the Germans and the Soviets, with the half east of the Vistula River handed to Stalin and the Soviet Union. Finland, Latvia, Estonia and Bessarabia were also chosen to enter the Soviet 'sphere of influence'.

On 1 September 1939, the Germans unleashed their vicious invasion of Poland, scything through the defences they encountered in a thrust towards Warsaw. But the Polish did not capitulate, instead regrouping to mount a fierce if ultimately doomed counterattack. Unaware of the agreement that had already decided their fate, the Polish expected the Red Army to come to their aid. So, when the Soviets fulfilled their side of the bargain by invading Poland from the east on 17 September, they were greeted in some parts as liberators.

This not unreasonable assumption had resulted in the bulk of the Polish Army (which by this point consisted of around 750,000 men) being sent westwards to confront the Germans. This left approximately 20,000 troops to watch the eastern borders. With reports placing the strength of the Soviet invasion force between 450,000 and 1 million men, it's easy to see why these valiant Polish soldiers never stood a chance.

Both the Germans and the Soviets immediately set about dismantling the apparatus of the Polish state, with horrific consequences. The Nazis viewed the Polish as an inferior race that had no right to an independent nation, while the Soviets viewed the nation of Poland as the product of its elite, educated classes. Yet both ideologies resulted in the same outcome: the massacre of Polish nationals.

Schooled in efficient killing by the Great Terror of 1937–1938, which entailed the ruthless purging of Communist Party and government officials, along with the widespread oppression of the peasantry, the NKVD began to remove the intellectual classes (officials, landowners, policemen and army officers). The purpose of this was to eradicate the 'threat' of Polish nationalism. Polish Jews were deported to Gulags in the frozen Siberian tundra, while executions became a regular occurrence, a prime example of which was the shooting of 21,892 Polish officers in the Katyn Forest and four other locations in April 1940.

Such was the eagerness of the invading forces to cooperate, the Germans and Soviets held a joint parade in Brest-Litovsk, and their troops often met one another in friendly encounters throughout Poland. On one occasion, the Germans even handed a conquered fortress over to their allies.

As the bloodshed continued in this newly occupied territory, a new target emerged for Stalin: Finland. With the territorial and military concessions set out for the Baltic states in the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact secured, the Soviets expected Finland to similarly acquiesce. But to Stalin's consternation, the small Scandinavian state remained resolute in its refusal to fold under pressure. When 'negotiations' with the Soviets collapsed on 13 November 1939, the Finns knew they had little time to reinforce the 150-kilometre-long (93-mile) Mannerheim Line – their key line of defence – named after their commander-in-chief, Carl Mannerheim.

The Soviets based their hastily drawn up invasion plan on a swift campaign, with the aim of concluding operations by 21 December, Stalin's 60th birthday. Considering that the Finns were massively outnumbered, possessed tsarist-era howitzers, lacked any tanks and only had enough artillery shells for a week of fighting, Soviet confidence was not entirely misplaced. But as is often the case in any war, this hubris ultimately proved to be unfounded.

When the Soviets crossed the border on 30 November they encountered ferocious resistance. The main thrust into Finland was conducted by the 7th Army along the Karelia Isthmus. It got off to a horrendous start as the Finns, careful to avoid fighting in the open, exploited the forest terrain to good effect. They also benefitted from having history's most lethal sniper in their ranks, Simo Hayha. In the space of 100 days (before a gunshot wound to the face forced his withdrawal) the man known as 'the White Death' killed 542 Soviets.

The Finnish forces held on until early March 1940 despite the mammoth forces ranged against them. The signing of the Moscow Peace Treaty on 12 March put an end to a campaign that had cost the Soviets over 200,000 men. In return, Finland could count the loss of approximately 25,000 dead and territories including the Gulf of Finland Islands.

The shambolic performance of the Red Army had a profound effect on Germany. Unbeknownst to Stalin, it reinforced Hitler's opinion that the Soviet Union was a rotten house that would collapse the moment its front door was kicked in. As swathes of Europe fell to the unstoppable Wehrmacht in 1940, it seemed logical to expect a similar outcome in the Soviet states. Hitler's

PARADE AT BREST-LITOVSK

The German-Soviet military parade in Brest-Litovsk was symbolic for many reasons. First, it was the city in which the Russians had signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk during WWI, ending their participation in the conflict. The terms of the treaty were largely dictated by the Germans and inflicted on the Russians. Holding a joint military parade in this location 19 years later was not a coincidence.

It also provided both sides with an opportunity to show the world that Poland was beyond saving. Holding it six days before the Polish formally surrendered proved that the fate of the occupied territory was already sealed. The ceremony marked the official withdrawal of the German troops to the western half of Poland and the handover of the city and fortress of Brest-Litovsk to the Soviets.

German and Soviet commanders stand together at the parade in Brest-Litovsk

THE SOVIET'S DIFFERENT ALLIANCES

MOLOTOV-RIBBENTROP PACT
Following the collapse of talks with the British and French, the USSR signs its infamous pact with Germany, laying the foundations for the division of Poland and the Baltics.
23 August 1939

GERMAN INVASION OF POLAND
The Germans cross the Polish border and begin their ruthless invasion, sweeping the stunned Polish military aside.
1 September 1939

BATTLE OF KHALKIN GOL
Following years of skirmishes on the Manchurian border, the Red Army conclusively defeats the Japanese at Khalkin Gol, putting an end to hostilities.
11 May – 15 September 1939

SOVIET INVASION OF POLAND
As outlined in the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, the Soviet Union invades Poland from the east, killing off hopes that Poland could hold out against invasion.
17 September 1939

POLAND SURRENDERS
Despite putting up a valiant fight, the Polish military leadership realise the situation is doomed and finally agree to sign the surrender papers.
28 September 1939

THE WINTER WAR
With the east of Poland and the Baltic states now under its control, the Soviets expect Finland to agree to its terms. But they stand firm, resulting in a Soviet invasion and the Winter War.
30 November 1939

FINLAND COMES TO TERMS
Unable to invade the whole of Finland, the Soviets finally convince the exhausted Finns to accept their terms and end hostilities. The Moscow Peace Treaty is signed.
13 March 1940

SOVIET-JAPANESE NEUTRALITY PACT
In order to ensure that both sides remain neutral during WWII, the Soviets sign a non-aggression pact with their former enemies. This extinguishes the threat of a Japanese invasion from the east.
13 April 1941

Berlin's fate was officially decided between Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin at Yalta in February 1945. Unofficially, Churchill had other ideas

eastern 'Garden of Eden' appeared more attainable than ever before.

Incredibly, the paranoid mind of Stalin led him to discount numerous warnings of the impending disaster, including those compiled by Richard Sorge, a spy in Tokyo with strong connections to the German embassy. Even the Red Orchestra, a spy network gathering information in the heart of Berlin, couldn't convince Stalin, whose judgement could not have been further off the mark.

On the morning of 22 June 1941, the Germans unleashed hell. Divided into three armies (North, Centre and South), a force of 3.8 million soldiers took the Soviets completely by surprise. Poorly distributed and warned only to shoot in self-defence, the Red Army ranks were paralysed by fear and confusion. General Heinz Guderian's motorised forces exploited the situation, carving up vast tracts of Soviet territory while mowing down the fleeing enemy troops. The genocidal war that Hitler had always wanted had begun.

In the face of this existential threat Stalin had little choice but to turn to the West for help. He quickly signed his empire up to the Allied Coalition alongside Britain and the U.S. (not actively engaged at this point), as well as a host of other countries. For the rest of the war, the Big Three (Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin) would cooperate in the fight against Germany.

Supplies were shipped to the Soviet territories in Atlantic convoys and included tanks, jeeps, weaponry and, most importantly, food. With vital agricultural terrain, including the 'breadbasket' of Ukraine, in German hands, the Soviet population once again faced the very real and harrowing prospect of starvation.

Cooperation between the British and the Soviets would rise to a whole new level on 25 August 1941 with their joint invasion of Iran. The purpose of Operation Countenance involved the seizure of Iranian oilfields and ensuring that Allied supply routes in the Persian Corridor were secure. The invasion was deemed necessary by the Allies as they believed the Iranian King Rezah Shah harboured sympathies for the Axis cause. By 17 September, the king had been deposed and both strategic objectives had been achieved.

Iran was also the location for the first meeting between the three main Allied leaders. Held at the Soviet embassy in the Iranian capital, the Tehran Conference (28 November – 1 December 1943) concluded with the Western Allies agreeing to open a second front in the war against Germany, something that Stalin had long been calling for.

It seems incredible that the Soviet Union began WWII as a German ally yet concluded it by participating in the destruction of Berlin (not to mention the widespread raping of German women and girls and the indiscriminate slaughtering of innocent civilians) as part of the Allied powers, having seen vast swathes (the Germans occupied ten per cent of the USSR at the greatest extent of the invasion) of its own land decimated by Hitler's merciless forces.

Both prior to and during the conflict, Stalin only ever acted in the interest of the Soviet Union, willingly siding with whomever he felt best served his cause. It is fair to say that his main concern was the extension of Soviet influence, and he had no qualms about inflicting terror upon other sovereign nations or even his own people at times in order to ultimately achieve it. To Stalin, the most catastrophic conflagration in human history came to represent an unprecedented opportunity to reshape the world to his and the USSR's benefit.

Equally, when the snake with whom he'd signed a pact suddenly turned and bit him, he instantly sought the help of former enemies in his efforts to kill it and ensure his own survival and that of the empire he ruled. Of all the key players in WWII, Stalin was the one who managed to manipulate the others most effectively, well aware of the influence that he carried on the geopolitical stage as the undisputed ruler of a superpower.

OPERATION BARBAROSSA
The German invasion of the Soviet Union begins in a blaze of artillery and confusion as the Soviets are taken by surprise. Stalin had refused to believe that Hitler would launch such an attack on the USSR so soon.
22 June 1941

SOVIETS JOIN ALLIED COALITION
In the face of the Germans' betrayal of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, Stalin endorses the Western Allies and signs the Soviet Union into the Allied Coalition ranged against the Axis he formerly allied his nation with.
June 1941

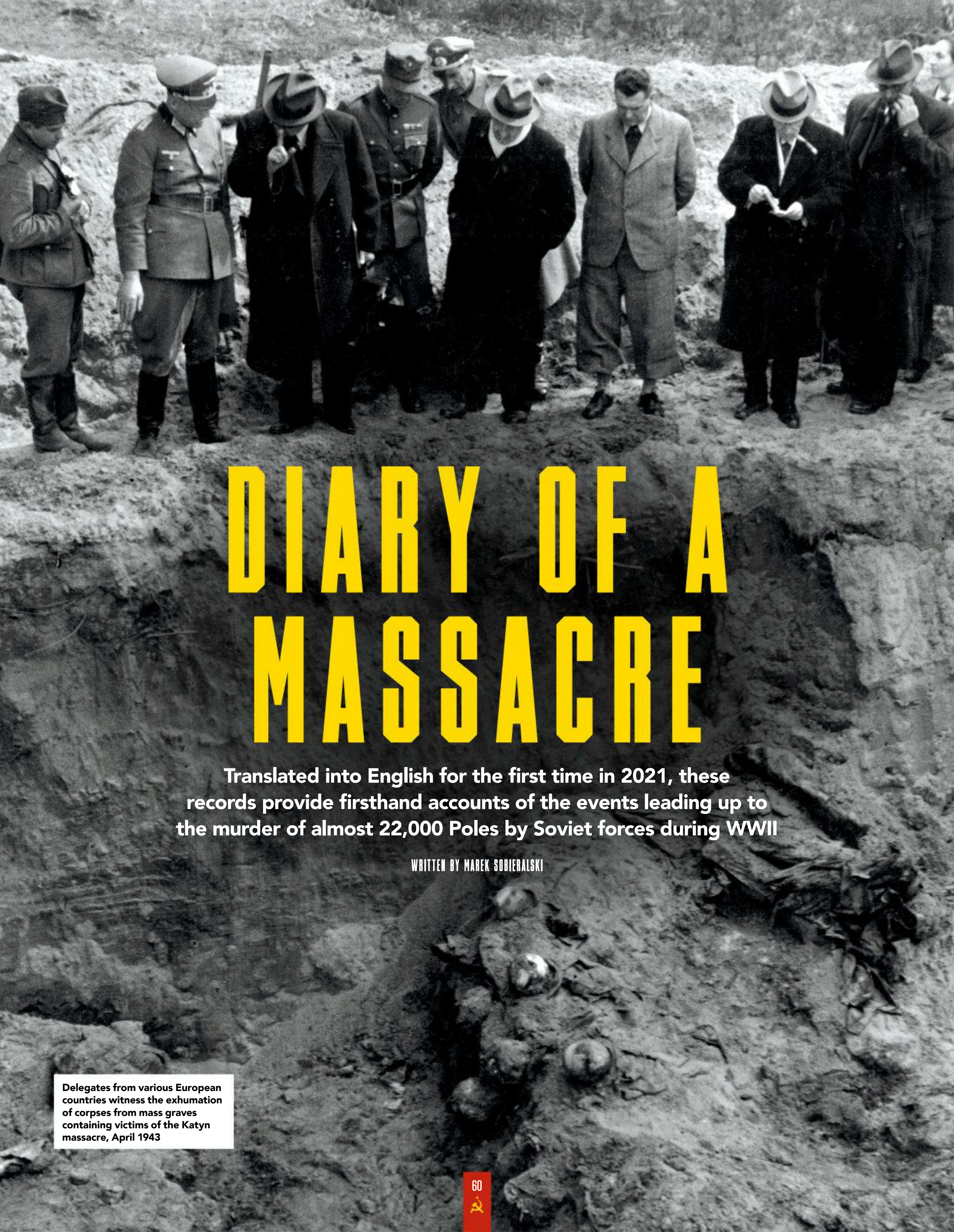
ALLIED SUPPLIES
A major factor in the Soviets' ability to keep fighting and feed their people is the aid provided by the West. Under the terms of the Lend-Lease, the U.S. supplies the Soviets with food, weaponry, vehicles, metals and fuel.
1941 onwards

ANGLO-SOVIET INVASION OF IRAN
Codenamed Operation Countenance, the British and Soviets work together to conquer Iran in order to secure the oilfields for the Soviets and secure the Persian Corridor.
25 August – 17 September 1941

BATTLE FOR MOSCOW
Following their crushing defeat in the Vyazma-Bryansk battles, the Soviets are pushed further back towards their capital as the Germans attempt to end the war with a final push on Moscow.
October 1941

OPERATION URANUS
As the fighting rages in and around the city of Stalingrad, the Soviets begin a major offensive against their former allies. The operation ends with the complete encirclement and destruction of the German 6th Army.
19 November 1942

TEHRAN CONFERENCE
Held in the Soviet embassy in the Iranian capital of Tehran, the leaders of the 'Big Three' meet for the first time. Stalin implores Roosevelt and Churchill to open a second front against the Germans, a request that they agree to.
28 November – 2 December 1943



DIARY OF A MASSACRE

Translated into English for the first time in 2021, these records provide firsthand accounts of the events leading up to the murder of almost 22,000 Poles by Soviet forces during WWII

WRITTEN BY MAREK SOBIERALSKI

Delegates from various European countries witness the exhumation of corpses from mass graves containing victims of the Katyn massacre, April 1943

The personal and sometimes harrowing diaries written by Polish officers during the months before they were murdered in the Katyn massacre were published in English for the first time in 2021. The moving entries show how the victims were unaware of the grisly fate that awaited them and reveal their everyday lives in the Soviet camps, their thoughts, plans and dreams.

The Katyn massacre was a series of mass executions of nearly 22,000 Polish military officers and intelligentsia that was carried out by the NKVD in April and May 1940. This was following the Soviet Union's surprise attack on Poland on 17 September 1939, after which Germany and the USSR carved up the country between them.

Poland's conscription system required every non-exempt university graduate to become a military reserve officer, so following the invasion, the NKVD was able to round up a large number of the Polish educated class. Over 200,000 people were taken into Soviet captivity as POWs; most privates were released after a relatively short time, with some being sent to labour camps, but officers were held in special NKVD camps, mainly in Kozielsk in northern Poland, Starobielsk (Ukraine) and Ostashkov (Russia).

Once at the camps the Polish prisoners were subjected to interrogations and political agitation by NKVD officers, who tried to recruit the Poles to cooperate with them, but the vast majority refused. The prisoners assumed that they would soon be released, but the interviews were in effect a selection process to determine who would live and who would die. According to NKVD reports, if a prisoner could not be persuaded to adopt a pro-Soviet attitude, he was declared a hardened and uncompromising enemy of the Soviet state. The prisoners were permitted to correspond with their families in Poland until March 1940, when communication abruptly stopped.

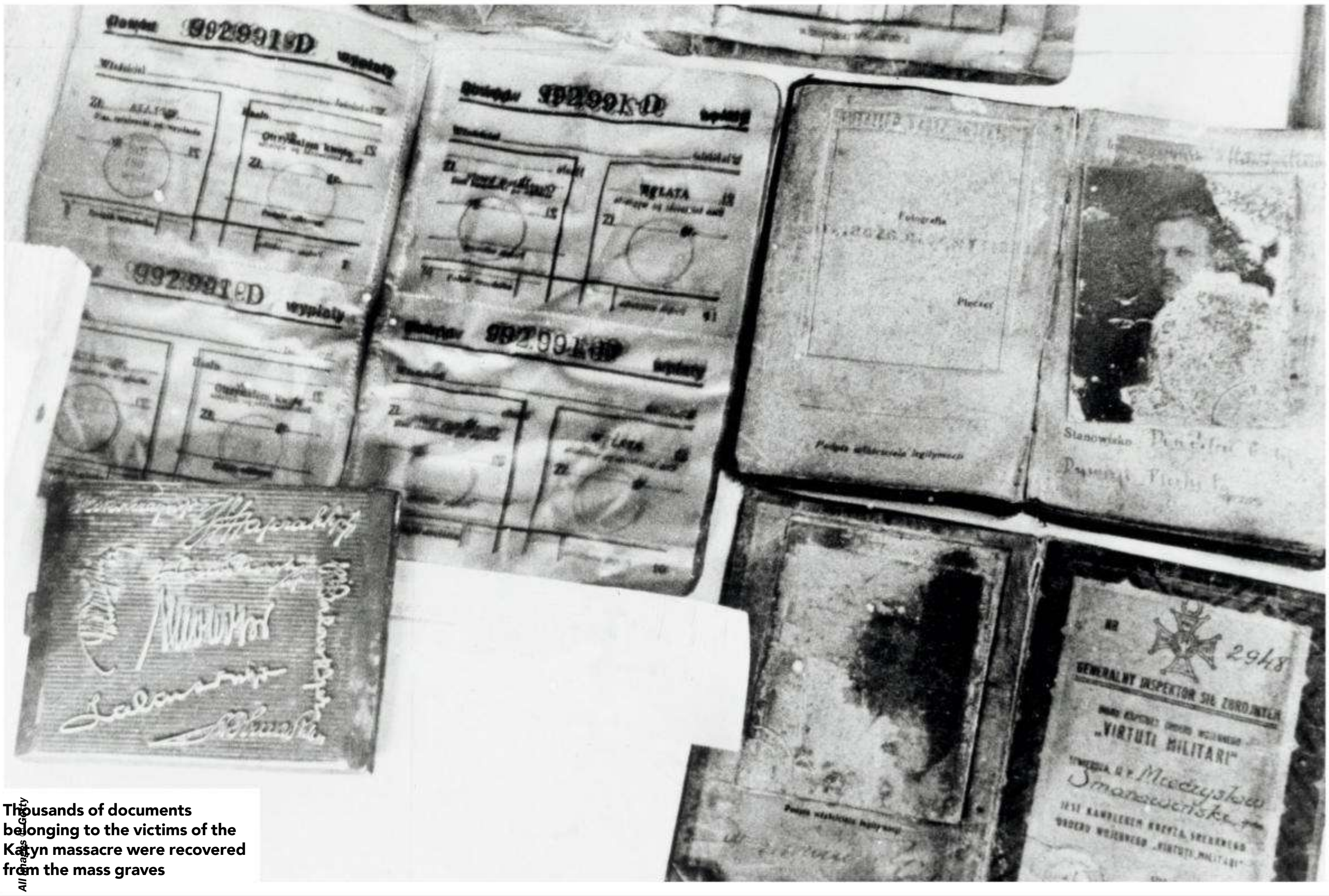
At the beginning of 1940, the Soviet authorities had decided to murder the Polish prisoners of war. On 5 March, following a note to Joseph Stalin from Lavrentiy Beria, six members of the Soviet Politburo signed an order to execute the Polish "nationalists and counterrevolutionaries" detained in the various camps.

The massacre decimated the military, as well as Poland's social and political elite. The victims included an admiral, generals, officers and NCOs of every rank, as well as army chaplains and pilots. Also murdered were a prince, landowners, refugees, university professors, medical and veterinary doctors, lawyers, engineers, teachers, writers and journalists, priests and ministers of different religions, parliamentary deputies, civil servants, diplomats and even famous Olympians.

Mass graves were unearthed by German troops after Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union, and the Third Reich announced its shocking discovery in April 1943. With the bodies they found numerous Polish artefacts such as letters, diaries, photographs and identification tags. They were put into crates and evacuated westward.

Among these items were 22 diaries and personal notes, which were packed into a small crate. At the time of the discovery, the conservation and processing of the finds was carried out by a team led by Dr. Jan Zygmunt Robel, a Polish forensic scientist at the Institute of Forensic Medicine and Forensics in Krakow. The documents were dirty and sometimes damaged, so the team was faced with a difficult task of preserving them and reading their contents, including many hours of carefully bathing the fragments of paper in chemicals. The team then catalogued all the documents and made four copies of each.

In May 1944, as part of Operation Most (Bridge), Lieutenant Colonel Roman Rutkowski of the Home Army handed copies of 15 of the diaries to



Thousands of documents belonging to the victims of the Katyn massacre were recovered from the mass graves

All images: Getty

the Polish government-in-exile in London. They are held at the Polish Underground Movement Study Trust in London. The trust was founded in London in 1947 and is a research and academic institution that contains historical material on the Polish Underground State during WWII. Among its founders were General Tadeusz Bór-Komorowski and many other leading members of the Polish Underground from the war years.

Unfortunately, the original diaries have not survived. In August 1944, the Germans took the crates with the various artefacts to Silesia, and then further west. It is believed that they were all burned at Radebeul near Dresden.

According to independent experts, there was no doubt who was responsible for the killings – the Soviets. But despite this, many Western observers dismissed the German claims as propaganda and an attempt to divide the Allies. The truth and the crime were in fact covered up by the Allies in order to appease Stalin and preserve the alliance with the Soviet Union. In 1952, a U.S. House Congressional Committee report found that many individuals in the U.S. Government had deliberately withheld and dismissed information about the massacre as "pressing the search would have irritated Soviet Russia and thus hindered the prosecution of the war to a successful conclusion".

Evidence of Soviet responsibility for the Katyn massacre was carefully concealed by the authorities for decades. It was not until 1991, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, that the Russian Government finally admitted that the Polish officers and intellectuals were murdered by the NKVD. In 1992, the President Boris Yeltsin ordered that copies of documents relating to the crime be given to the Poles.

The legal assessment of Poland's Chief Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation – the investigative division of the Institute of National Remembrance – considers the massacre to be genocide, a crime against humanity and a war crime. It reached this conclusion due to the massacre's ideological motivation by class and nationality, its scale, and the alliance of the USSR with the Third Reich at the time.

This Polish legal assessment of the crime continues to be rejected by Russia, the legal successor of the fallen USSR. Russia did initiate an investigation, which concluded in 2005 and stated that the murder of Polish prisoners of war was not genocide but an "ordinary" crime. The Russian investigation also stated this crime had gone beyond the statute of limitations, occurring too long ago for any sort of legal proceedings to be initiated.

In 2012, the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg judged that the Katyn massacre was "a war crime committed by the USSR authorities".

Presented in *The Katyn Diaries* are English translations of 12 of those diaries that were dug up in 1942, which help tell the human story and open a window into the individual and personal tragedies of these very different individuals. They give us an insight into the prisoners' everyday lives in captivity and the human emotions and hardships they experienced during what was undoubtedly a difficult and testing time.

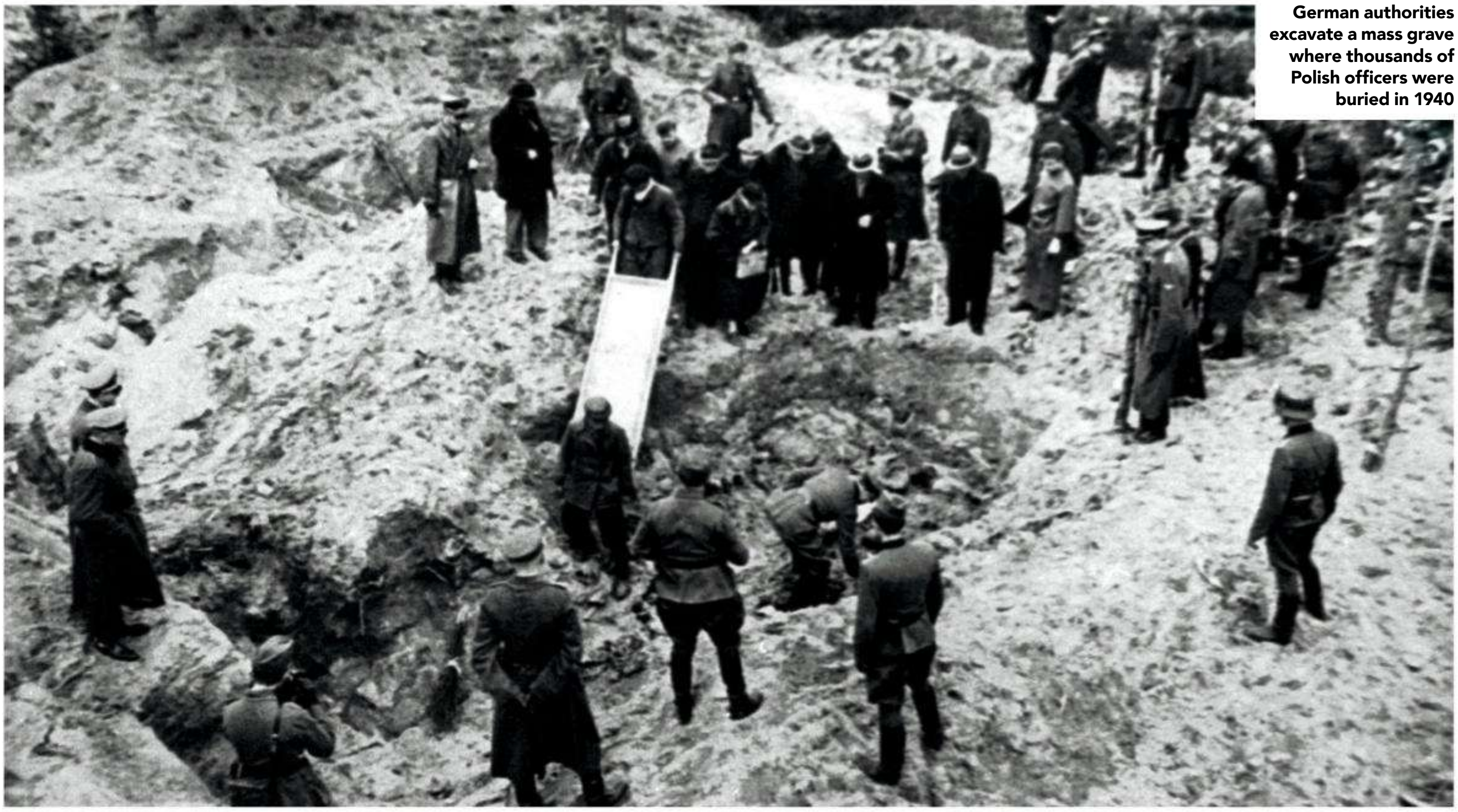
Where possible, a short biography of the diary author has been included, as well as a photograph or two, which gives the reader some additional and interesting information about the individual whose words they are about to read. The book also contains a brief description of the Katyn massacre, as well as seven illustrations by Rafal Mroz, which add an additional visual that helps to shed further light on a particularly disturbing chapter in the history of WWII.

Each diary and diary author are very different, and you get a sense of the author's character and who they were. You see clear differences between these individuals while also getting a sense of their camaraderie and unity of spirit.

"EVIDENCE OF SOVIET RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE KATYN MASSACRE WAS CAREFULLY CONCEALED BY THE AUTHORITIES FOR DECADES"

KATYŃ
1940
KOZIELSK
OSTASZKÓW
STAROBIELSK

This military cemetery in Warsaw, Poland, contains the remains of 4,412 Poles murdered in the 1940 Katyn massacre



German authorities excavate a mass grave where thousands of Polish officers were buried in 1940

All Images © Getty

Reading these diaries, we find out what camp life in Kozielsk was like, what the prisoners had to endure, what they were looking forward to, their fears, and even what they dreamed about. Crucially, the diaries also enable us to better understand and reconstruct the last days before their executions.

The thing the prisoners mention the most (apart from the cold and terrible food) is the longing for their loved ones. The prisoners worried about their families, in particular their wives and children. They also wrote about the latest news from the front that was conveyed to them. They wrote on any suitable piece of paper they could get their hands on; from calendars to diaries, notebooks and loose sheets of paper – every scrap was used.

On 6 October 1939, shortly after falling into Soviet captivity, Major Adam Solski wrote: "After a good night's sleep, snow in the morning as in Poland in December. A glass of hot water and many promises of breakfast. Our money has no value. We do nothing. Quarrels – fault-finding – bickering. Until midnight we had no sustenance except hot water."

On 17 October he wrote: "Nothing in particular has happened. I was the orderly and went to the kitchen for breakfast, lunch and dinner… After breakfast, privates from Kielce province arrived from the region of Starobielsk, with whom they do not know what to do: whether to send them back to the border and hand them over to the Germans or to leave them. We did not find any willing to stay with us. Even one who was prosecuted in Poland for being a communist does not want to stay. What does he dislike about the SSR here? The monotony of life, mutual brown nosing and sucking up to new idols: Lenin, Stalin, Molotov – Krasnaya Armia [Red Army] liberator of nations…"

On Poland's independence day on 11 November, Lieutenant Maksymilian Trzepałka wrote: "(weather, warm). Independence Day. Captivity is terrible, losing freedom. We held a small service in the barrack. In the evening a colonel recited a poem, and a friend (a singer from Poznan) sang a few songs."

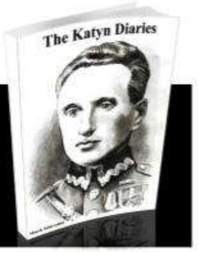
On Christmas Day, Lieutenant Dobiesław Jakubowicz wrote: "Today is our wedding anniversary, Marys, and I have been so far away from you for four months. I believe that we shall celebrate our next anniversary and Christmas together my darling, and perhaps we may even see each other sooner. It is difficult to describe how I feel at the moment, but you know such feelings well – longing. I feel sad and I think I cannot write any more, Marys. General news de publicis is wonderful and getting better, so we have a beautiful gift. Apparently we are to leave on 7.1.40, so we will see each other soon, Marys. Lying here I imagine how Bozenka is already running around, how I will play with her, and of you my love, how I will greet you and other things, which I will not write about here. You stand before my eyes throughout the day, Marys, my darling, and I miss you so much that I cannot relax. Maybe you are thinking about me today, on our anniversary, I have your beautiful image constantly before my eyes."

On 1 April 1940, as the killings commenced, Major Kazimierz Szczekowski wrote: "At last the bomb has gone off. The first transport with about 100 people left today – various ranks, ages and origins, to where it is not known."

Szczekowski continued: "Huge excitement in the camp. They say that by the end of the month, we will all be taken away, but we do not know to where. A few hundred more prisoners departed today, supposedly for distribution camps to the west. And outside it has cooled, as if from spite. Departures continue. I am also ready – linen washed, boots repaired."

On 12 April, while the killings were taking place, Lieutenant Bronisław Wajs wrote: "Barred prison wagons for convicts. Without food or water. Six of us prisoners of war in a 1 x 2 compartment. Layover in Smolensk. 22:00 porridge already cold."

From reading these harrowing diaries and notes we do not go through the final violent moments with the authors, but we know their terrible fate only too well.



The Katyn Diaries by Marek Sobieralski is available to buy on Amazon, in paperback or on Kindle

A Wehrmacht soldier takes cover during the winter of 1941. Barbarossa cost Germany around 775,000 casualties

OPERATION BARBAROSSA

Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union was Hitler's greatest gamble of WWII and the bloody realisation of his most ambitious dreams

WRITTEN BY CHARLES GINGER

In the summer of 1940, with much of Europe crushed beneath the boot of a rampant Wehrmacht, Hitler had every reason to be euphoric. His pact with the Soviet Union, signed in August 1939, had held, enabling his forces to sweep through Poland before surging into Western Europe. By late June of 1940, only the British remained to stand against them, the narrow escape of over 300,000 troops from Dunkirk scarred into the national consciousness. And yet despite a torrent of victories that led Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel to label Hitler as "the greatest warlord in history", the Führer was not satisfied.

Britain's refusal to acknowledge Germany's triumph and submit to peace talks puzzled Hitler. After all, he had always been open about his desire for peace, going so far as to "appeal to reason" during his annual speech in the Reichstag on 19 July 1940. To Hitler's chagrin, Churchill and the British people remained resolute, leading Hitler to surmise that Britain was pinning its hopes on the Soviet Union. Hitler's delusions led him to reason that only the complete annihilation of the Soviets would force Britain to recognise her cause was lost.

During a conference with his military commanders at his lair in Berchtesgaden, Bavaria, on 31 July 1940, Hitler outlined his most ambitious plans yet: Germany would invade the USSR the following year. "The sooner Russia is crushed, the better," he explained. "If we were to start in May 1941, we would have five months to finish the job."

However, while there were strategic motives behind Hitler's determination to destroy the USSR, arguably the more pressing desires behind Hitler's greatest gamble were of an ideological nature. While the summer of 1940 may have witnessed the germination of an idea that would become Operation Barbarossa, a cataclysmic showdown with 'Judeo-Bolshevism' was something that Hitler had first mentioned while writing his book, *Mein Kampf*, in 1924/25.

When discussing the apparently pressing need for Germany to secure *Lebensraum* (living space) in order to ensure a future in which the nation would have ample space and resources, Hitler was characteristically blunt when outlining his intended targets. "If we speak of soil in Europe today, we can primarily have in mind only Russia and her border states." Describing the Slavs of Russia as "an inferior race", Hitler warned that "the end of Jewish rule in Russia will also be the end of Russia as a state."

Hitler viewed the fate of the human race as an endless struggle for resources in a finite space, one that would end, in his twisted view, in the eventual triumph of "inferior" races (namely the Jews) unless a "pure" race was willing to fight to prevent them. In his primal opinion, "Nature knows no boundaries. She places lifeforms on this globe and then sets them free in a play for power."

Believing that every evil on Earth could be placed at the feet of Jews, Hitler sought to tear down anything that he perceived as being a Jewish entity or system. Communism, he claimed, was one such creation, and it was this distorted belief that led him to state that it was Germany's duty to defeat the nation that had given communism a home: the Soviet Union.

Unswerving in his confidence that Britain was already beaten and thereby lacked the will or capacity to open a second front and ensnare Germany in a wider conflict, Hitler directed the German high command to begin planning the invasion. The operation was to be codenamed Barbarossa (it was originally slated as Fritz), in honour of the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, a talented military commander.

Scheduled for 15 May 1941, the operation would see three army groups (North, Centre and South) pouring across the Polish-Soviet border under the respective leadership of Wilhelm Ritter von Leeb, Feodor von Bock and Gerd von Runstedt. Von Leeb's forces were tasked with taking the Baltics and Leningrad; Bock's men were to head first to Smolensk and then onto Moscow; and Runstedt was to race to secure the "breadbasket" of Ukraine and the oil-rich Caucasus. Certain of victory, Hitler boasted, "We only have to kick the door in and the whole rotten structure will come crashing down."

While Germany began to make the necessary preparations for Barbarossa, the target of its impending assault sat paralysed. In the wake of

German soldiers attack a Soviet bunker with a Flammenwerfer, which was capable of spitting flames up to 25 metres (82 feet)

Stalin's ruthless purges in the late 1930s, which saw three quarters of the Red Army's leadership executed or imprisoned, the forces of the USSR were woefully short on both morale and efficiency. To compound its already significant problems, Stalin insisted on controlling the placement of his divisions, further hamstringing the Red Army.

Labouring under the false belief that Hitler could only attack the USSR once he had dealt with Britain, Stalin was sure that any invasion was at least a year away. His obstinate refusal to accept the threat massing on his borders was further emboldened in April 1941 when Stalin received a letter from Winston Churchill warning of the Germans' intentions. Instead of heeding the British prime minister, Stalin discarded Churchill's correspondence as an Allied attempt to provoke the Soviets into launching a pre-emptive strike against their German allies, thereby opening a new theatre and reducing the pressure on the Allies.

Although Stalin's suspicions about Churchill's motives were understandable, his dismissal of the warnings of another, closer source were nothing short of catastrophic. In May of 1941, Richard Sorge, a Soviet spy working in Japan, informed Moscow that Germany was indeed planning to attack, information that he had received from none other than Colonel Eugen Ott, the military attaché at the German embassy in Tokyo.

Amazingly, even when Sorge provided a date of 20 June 1941 (just two days off the actual launch date of 22 June), Stalin remained implacable, insisting Hitler was not "such an idiot" as to risk a war on two fronts. Stalin would be proved spectacularly wrong.

A five-week delay due to Hitler's decision to invade Yugoslavia in May 1941 after its pro-Nazi government had been toppled meant Germany was not ready to unleash its eastern campaign until June. Barbarossa was to be a campaign of extermination, with the ruthless removal of the elites and mass starvation employed as a method of subjugating Soviet cities. In fact, the German High Command went so far as to devise a 'Hunger Plan' that would see food taken from the Soviet Union and given to German soldiers and citizens. (According to historian Timothy Snyder, approximately 4.2 million Soviet civilians were starved to death between 1941 and 1944.) No quarter was to be given.

At 3.15 a.m. on 22 June, thousands of Luftwaffe engines burst into life to signal the beginning of Barbarossa, the fleet sailing high over the German assault boats bobbing on the River Bug in anticipation. As the planes zeroed in on their targets (airfields lined with neat rows of stationary Soviet planes), thousands of German artillery pieces began to belch flame into the sky. Hitler was finally attacking the entity he loathed the most, and he'd gathered 3.8 million soldiers (including Romanians, Italians and Slovaks) for the job, well-trained men supported by approximately 600,000 vehicles, 3,350 armoured vehicles, 3,000 aircraft and 500,000 horses.

As millions of troops raced into the USSR, their counterparts radioed their superiors demanding to know what to do. Such was the shock of the assault that many border guards were gunned down in their nightwear, their homes and families engulfed in the flames of the bombardment. Despite this, Stalin was still – inexplicably – wary of some Allied trick and ordered that nothing be done to provoke the Germans, clinging as he was to the idea that Hitler would not have dared to double-cross him.

THE SHADOW OF EVIL

Barbarossa was not just a military operation – it was a race war. The Nazis planned to ethnically cleanse Russia

The Einsatzgruppen (SS death squads) tasked with following the Wehrmacht into the Soviet Union were ruthless in the execution of their primary task: murdering civilians. From Soviet commissars to Jews and Romani, millions of innocent people were shot, hanged or otherwise killed by the prowling SS commandos scouring the lands already scorched by the advancing German Army. The predominant method of execution involved lining victims (including women, children and the elderly) along the edge of pits they had been forced to dig themselves, then shooting them in the back of the head.

One of the most famous examples of such a mass execution was the Babi Yar massacre of September 1941. Over two days, German soldiers and Ukrainian police officers shot 33,771 people in a ravine north of Kiev, many of whom were forced to lie down on the corpses of those who had gone before them.

Aside from Poland, it was the Soviet nations (notably the Baltics) that witnessed the worst atrocities of the war. Estonia, just one of a group of countries that suffered the horrors of Hitler's genocidal war, lost almost 99 per cent of its Jewish population.

Within five months of the invasion of the Baltics, Einsatzgruppe A alone had slaughtered nearly 140,000 people. Yet such figures failed to satisfy Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler, who in time decided that gassing "undesirables" would be a quicker and cleaner method. By the war's end, Himmler's charges had murdered approximately 1.5 million Jews along the Eastern Front and thousands of Romani.

Soviet bombers soar over Moscow. Following horrendous losses in the early stages of the war, the Red Army Air Force gradually recovered and played a key role in offensive operations

In all their wildest dreams, the German commanders could never have dared to hope to find their adversaries so woefully off guard. Many of the Soviets' defensive positions lacked the weaponry needed to counter a concentrated Panzer attack, and they could not hope to rely on any aid from above; on the first day of the operation the Soviets lost approximately 1,800 planes to the Luftwaffe's 35.

Within two days of the start of the attack, many of the 49 German Panzer battalions selected for the invasion were already 80 kilometres (50 miles) inside the USSR. By 28 June, over 400,000 Soviet troops were encircled outside of Minsk as the Second Panzer Group, under the command of General Heinz Guderian, linked up with Hermann Hoth's Third Panzer Group.

To the north, General von Leeb was faring just as well, his troops hailed as emancipators by the violently suppressed peoples of the Baltics, many of them actively helping the Germans by attacking a number of Red Army positions. However, the invaders certainly didn't have it all their way.

Army Group South, charged with taking Kiev and then hurrying on to the priceless oil fields of the Caucasus, was finding the going difficult in the face of determined resistance. Rundstedt was doubly unfortunate as he was not only marching on the most heavily defended region of the front lines, but his men were doing so as KV and T-34 tanks (the latter the best all-round tank of the entire war) rolled towards them. While the central and northern thrusts of the German forces continued to slice into Soviet territory, Rundstedt found himself increasingly bogged down. His failure to keep up with the rest would ultimately prove fatal for Hitler's hopes of a rapid victory. Yet as July approached, the overall picture from a German perspective seemed unexpectedly rosy.

Upon finally realising that Hitler had betrayed him, Stalin had fallen into a stupor of despair that lasted for over a week. Now, with machinery being evacuated from Ukraine, Stalin finally began to emerge from his trance, and on 3 July he addressed the Soviet people as his "comrades" as he called on them to "selflessly join our patriotic war of liberation against the fascist enslavers".

While the idea the Soviet people were fighting to defend a communist utopia that upheld their rights and shunned the violence so freely used by the Wehrmacht (especially the SS divisions attached to it) is laughable, Stalin was not exaggerating when he referred to the threat of enslavement. From the outset of the war, Hitler had expressed his desire to carve Germany's new eastern territories into a series of states filled with Soviet slaves. A cruel and manipulative tyrant he may have been, but in his speech at the start of July, Stalin was, for once, telling his people at least some of the truth.

On the same day that Stalin addressed the nation, German General Franz Halder, chief of staff of army high command, confided in his diary that it was "no overstatement to say that the Russian campaign has been won in the space of two weeks". In hindsight this statement reeks of hubris, but at the time German confidence was more than justified. By 13 July, the German armies had advanced between 300 and 598 kilometres (186 and 372 miles), incapacitated (either by killing, injuring or capturing) over 589,000 enemy soldiers and obliterated over 6,850 aircraft. The Wehrmacht was edging ever closer to Moscow, and the First Battle of Smolensk was about to finish with the entrapment of almost 760,000 Soviet troops. A glorious triumph loomed. Then came a high command directive that would change everything.

On Saturday, 19 July 1941, Hitler issued an order that the Soviet armies trapped around Smolensk (the 16th, 19th and 20th) were to be utterly destroyed before Army Group Centre advanced – not towards Moscow but south to the outskirts of Kiev to aid Army Group South, which was still 80 kilometres (50 miles) outside of the Ukrainian capital.

Longing to continue the drive for Moscow, both Halder and von Bock were adamant that the city had to remain their priority, but Hitler was unmoved. And so, on 23 August, Army Group Centre swung south. Three weeks later its southern counterpart started to drive north, and on 16 September two more Soviet armies were annihilated as the pincer closed east of Kiev. Stalin's order that the city be held at all costs had condemned over 700,000 Soviet troops to encirclement, men who could have been saved.

Still progressing steadily in the north, the forces under the command of von Leeb had sealed off the city of Leningrad eight days prior to the encirclement of Kiev. Hitler had selected the city as a primary target during the planning of Barbarossa, and now his armies (with the support of Finnish troops sent to retake lands lost to the Soviets during the Winter War of 1939–1940) had provided him with the chance to put his Hunger Plan into action once more. Instead of bombarding the city, its people were to be starved into submission in a siege that would last until January 1944 and claim over 800,000 lives.

Now that the resistance shielding Kiev had been removed, Army Group Centre could once again turn its gaze on Moscow. Despite the panic that had spread throughout the city, Stalin had chosen to stay and invigorate the natives with his presence. He had placed the defence of the city in the hands of General Georgy Zhukov, a formidable figure who had overseen the desperate efforts to counter the Siege of Leningrad.

Zhukov wasted little time in putting the men and women of Moscow to work excavating defensive trenches and anti-tank ditches (nearly 3 million cubic metres of earth was moved by hand).

The factories that continued to function (much of the Soviets' industry had been evacuated east) were also turned to military tasks (a clock maker was asked to begin building mine detonators). If the Germans were to take Moscow, Zhukov was determined they would pay dearly for every street.

Codenamed Operation Typhoon, the assault on Moscow began on 2 October 1941. At the outset of the attack the Germans enjoyed a 2:1 superiority in tanks and troops and a 3:1 advantage in aircraft. It seemed that it would only be a matter of time before the Soviet capital fell. But there was one enemy the Germans failed to account for: Mother Nature.

Known as the *rasputitsa* (the time without roads), on 8 October a yearly deluge began, churning the roads into sucking quagmires that dramatically slowed the German advance. By the end of the month the Wehrmacht was still many miles from its target. Yet while the rain was a frustration, the freezing temperatures that followed in December were a death sentence.

By 5 December the Germans were forced to halt 30 kilometres (19 miles) short of Moscow as the conditions froze both men and machines, the lack of proper winter clothing (a result of Hitler's assurances that the campaign would be over in a matter of weeks) condemning thousands to death.

On the same day as the Germans stopped their advance the Soviet armies behind Moscow (carefully husbanded by Zhukov and reinforced by soldiers transferred from Siberia once it had become clear that Japan was not planning to attack the region) were readying to unleash a merciless counteroffensive. Certain that the Red Army was all but beaten, the unfortunate German troops dug in around Moscow did not know what hit them when the Soviets began their attack with a massive bombardment. The moment the guns settled waves of T-34s poured across the frozen earth towards the German positions accompanied by a total force of over 1 million men and a resurgent Red Army Air Force.

Stunned by the sudden change in fortunes, Hitler demanded that every patch of ground be fought for, and in time the retreating German forces steadied themselves and consolidated their lines, but the threat to Moscow, built up over months of fighting, had been eradicated in a matter of days. Now it was the Red Army's turn to advance. It would do so relentlessly, forcing a doomed enemy closer and closer to its homeland, the men and women among its ranks hungry to exact a bloody revenge on the invaders of the motherland. Germany's day of reckoning was now an inevitability.

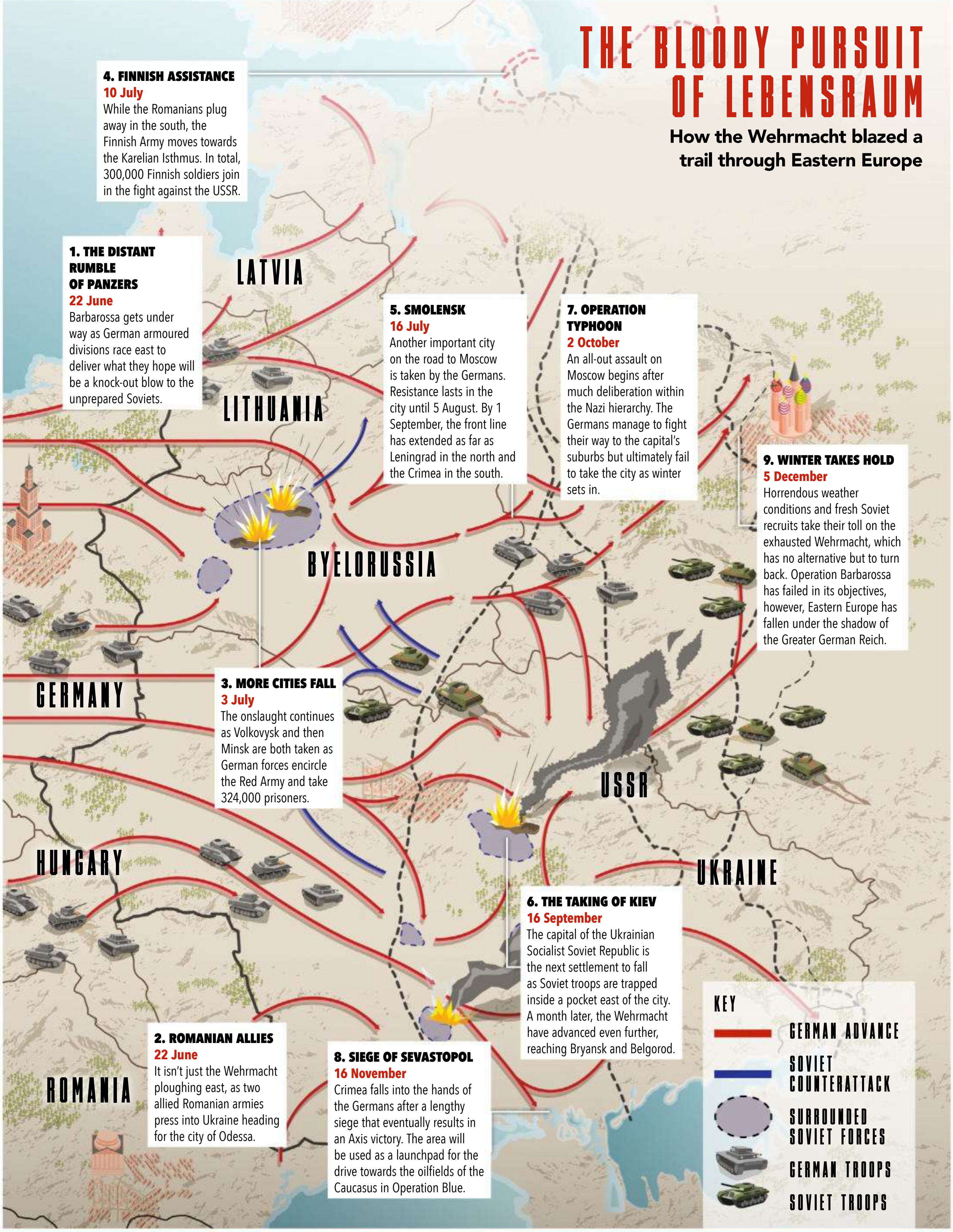
Her total defeat in the east would not only change the fate of Germany and the USSR but the wider world, pitting the Soviets against their former Allies in a scramble to dominate the post-WWII era.

> "THE MEN AND WOMEN OF THE RED ARMY WERE HUNGRY TO EXACT A BLOODY REVENGE ON THE INVADERS"

Red Army troops, clad in the winter clothing the Germans lacked, storm across a snow-blanketed field

THE BLOODY PURSUIT OF LEBENSRAUM

How the Wehrmacht blazed a trail through Eastern Europe



1. THE DISTANT RUMBLE OF PANZERS
22 June
Barbarossa gets under way as German armoured divisions race east to deliver what they hope will be a knock-out blow to the unprepared Soviets.

2. ROMANIAN ALLIES
22 June
It isn't just the Wehrmacht ploughing east, as two allied Romanian armies press into Ukraine heading for the city of Odessa.

3. MORE CITIES FALL
3 July
The onslaught continues as Volkovysk and then Minsk are both taken as German forces encircle the Red Army and take 324,000 prisoners.

4. FINNISH ASSISTANCE
10 July
While the Romanians plug away in the south, the Finnish Army moves towards the Karelian Isthmus. In total, 300,000 Finnish soldiers join in the fight against the USSR.

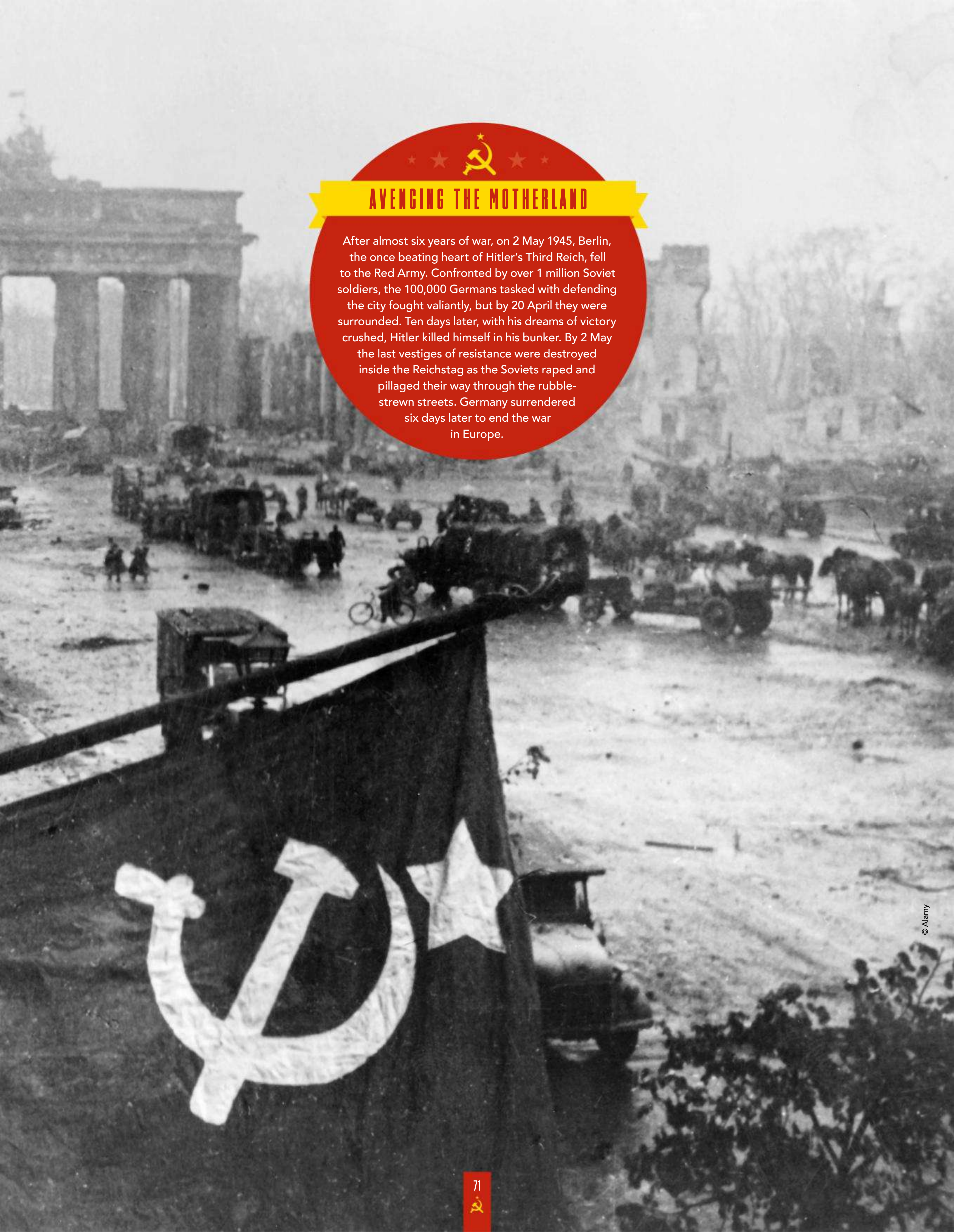
5. SMOLENSK
16 July
Another important city on the road to Moscow is taken by the Germans. Resistance lasts in the city until 5 August. By 1 September, the front line has extended as far as Leningrad in the north and the Crimea in the south.

6. THE TAKING OF KIEV
16 September
The capital of the Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic is the next settlement to fall as Soviet troops are trapped inside a pocket east of the city. A month later, the Wehrmacht have advanced even further, reaching Bryansk and Belgorod.

7. OPERATION TYPHOON
2 October
An all-out assault on Moscow begins after much deliberation within the Nazi hierarchy. The Germans manage to fight their way to the capital's suburbs but ultimately fail to take the city as winter sets in.

8. SIEGE OF SEVASTOPOL
16 November
Crimea falls into the hands of the Germans after a lengthy siege that eventually results in an Axis victory. The area will be used as a launchpad for the drive towards the oilfields of the Caucasus in Operation Blue.

9. WINTER TAKES HOLD
5 December
Horrendous weather conditions and fresh Soviet recruits take their toll on the exhausted Wehrmacht, which has no alternative but to turn back. Operation Barbarossa has failed in its objectives, however, Eastern Europe has fallen under the shadow of the Greater German Reich.



AVENGING THE MOTHERLAND

After almost six years of war, on 2 May 1945, Berlin, the once beating heart of Hitler's Third Reich, fell to the Red Army. Confronted by over 1 million Soviet soldiers, the 100,000 Germans tasked with defending the city fought valiantly, but by 20 April they were surrounded. Ten days later, with his dreams of victory crushed, Hitler killed himself in his bunker. By 2 May the last vestiges of resistance were destroyed inside the Reichstag as the Soviets raped and pillaged their way through the rubble-strewn streets. Germany surrendered six days later to end the war in Europe.

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WHAT IF THE SOVIET UNION HAD INVENTED THE ATOMIC BOMB FIRST?

A Soviet victory in the race for the atomic bomb could have meant a very different Cold War

INTERVIEW BY CALLUM MCKELVIE

INTERVIEW WITH

DAVID J. HOLLOWAY

David J. Holloway is professor emeritus at Stanford University and the author of *Stalin and the Bomb: The Soviet Union and Atomic Energy, 1939-1956* (1994) and the essay *Nuclear Weapons and the Cold War in Europe* (2013).

When physicists Lise Meitner and Otto Frisch discovered nuclear fission in December 1938, the possibility of an atomic weapon became a frightening reality. Scientists from several countries began work, seeking to produce such a bomb. However, after being invaded by Nazi Germany in 1941, the Soviet Union chose instead to focus its efforts on repelling the enemy. Meanwhile, in the United States, the Manhattan Project saw a team of experts led by J. Robert Oppenheimer devote vast resources to ensuring America were the leaders in the race. In 1945, Oppenheimer was ultimately victorious, but what if the bomb had fallen first into the hands of the Soviet Union? Would the weapon have been detonated not over Hiroshima but Berlin? Would we still have had the Cold War?

What exactly was the Soviet atomic project and how did it fit into the wider race for the bomb taking place during the 1940s?

When nuclear fission was discovered at the end of 1938, Soviet scientists were as excited about the discovery as physicists in other countries. They did work on investigating the possibility of a nuclear fission chain reaction, as either a power reactor or an explosive reaction – a bomb. But in June of 1941, when the Germans invaded the Soviet Union, the work was ended. There were much more immediate tasks at hand because the German armies advanced rapidly and were quickly able to threaten Moscow. Despite this, the Soviet Union did learn about the work going on, initially in Britain and then in the United States, through their intelligence service. Perhaps most importantly, they were able to obtain a copy of the MAUD report, which was a classified report investigating the possibility of using uranium to construct a bomb. One of the famous Cambridge Five spies transmitted the report to Moscow in October of 1941, at almost exactly the same time it was being briefed to President Roosevelt in Washington, D.C. So the Soviet Union was on a par with the U.S. in terms of scientific knowledge regarding an atomic weapon.

However, while the report helped to speed up the Manhattan Project, it was largely ignored by the Soviet Union. Lavrentiy Beria, who was head of Soviet intelligence, feared that it was a scam designed to distract them. Additionally, the prospect of a bomb in two or three years, which is essentially what the MAUD report

The mushroom cloud over Nagasaki

Main image source: © Getty Images, © Alamy/mapl

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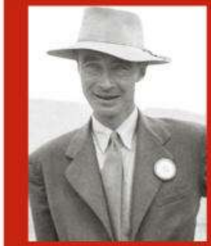
THE PAST

1942-1945



J. Robert Oppenheimer

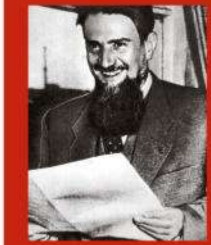
J. Robert Oppenheimer was a gifted physicist, chosen as the scientific director of the American attempt to create an atomic weapon, the Manhattan Project. It was during the war that Oppenheimer became interested in the possibility of nuclear bombs, concerned that Nazi Germany may possibly have already been creating such a weapon. Oppenheimer chose Los Alamos as the site for the project, and on 16 July 1945, his team tested Trinity, their first atomic weapon. Oppenheimer was opposed to the bombing of Nagasaki, and later, after the war, to the development of the more powerful hydrogen bomb. He was targeted during the 'Red Scare' for supposedly having communist sympathies.

1943-1949

Klaus Fuchs

Fuchs was a scientist who in 1943 joined the Manhattan Project. However, Fuchs was also a spy who provided information to the Soviet Union on the development of the American atomic project. He was discovered in 1949 when the United States and the UK cracked the codes used by Soviet spies with the VENONA project. Fuchs would be sentenced to 14 years imprisonment, after which he moved to East Germany, passing away in 1988. The importance of the information supplied by Fuchs to the Soviet atomic project remains a source of debate.

1940S



Igor Kurchatov

Kurchatov was the director of the Soviet nuclear programme. He was known for wearing a large beard, which he stated would not be cut until the programme succeeded. Kurchatov would later pursue the peaceful use of nuclear technology, becoming fearful of the potential use of atomic weapons. Aware of his own responsibility, he sought to argue against further testing. Despite the success of the Soviet nuclear project, he continued to wear his beard for the remainder of his life.

stated, didn't seem very interesting when you're desperately trying to defend Moscow against the German attack. However, when intelligence came to Moscow about German work on a potential bomb, Stalin signed the decree setting up a small experimental project of their own.

How much more advanced was the Manhattan Project?

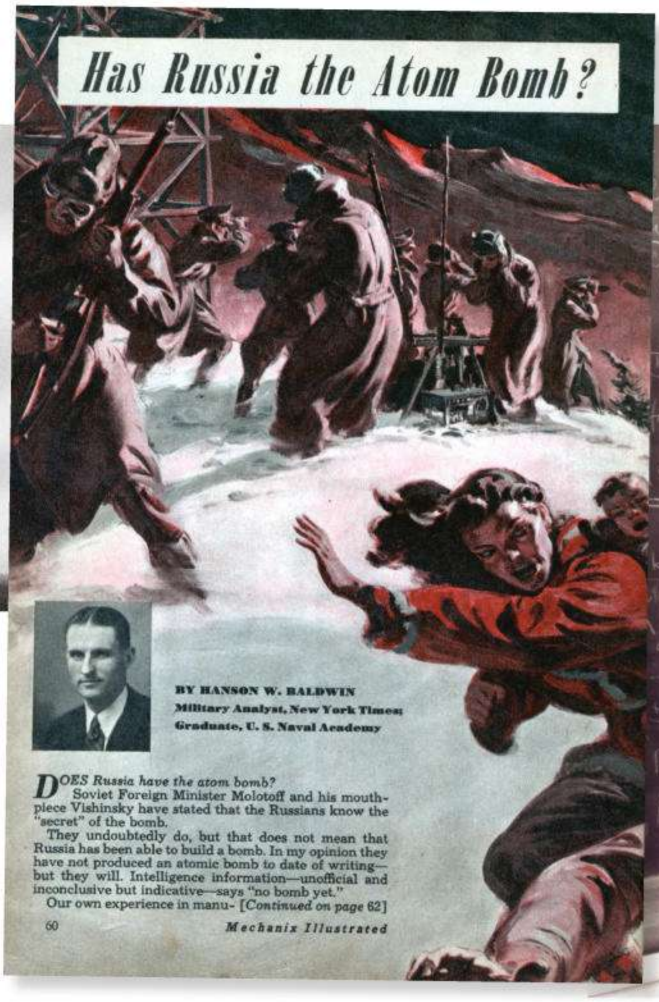
The thing to remember is that although the U.S. entered the war in December 1941, it was not subject to invasion or to bombing in the way the Soviet Union was. By that point the German armies had Leningrad under siege and were even threatening Moscow. Indeed, when Stalin signed the decree setting up the relatively small project it was just as the Battle for Stalingrad was beginning. The scientist who was put in charge, Igor Kurchatov, had to assemble his group at a time when the country was fighting to defend itself. Meanwhile, Roosevelt had given authorisation to turn the American research on the bomb into an industrial project. I think we forget that the Manhattan Project employed maybe 120,000 people. So that's the key difference. What you see in the Soviet Union is a pre-industrial project on the bomb, which is constantly receiving espionage concerning the Manhattan Project. The scientists involved were very conscious that they were lagging behind.

So it's likely that it would never have been possible for Kurchatov's group to have overtaken the Manhattan Project at any time?

No, I don't think it would have been possible. Just given the conditions of the war. Even if they had decided, let's say before the German attack, to set up the atomic industry to produce the bomb, I doubt it would have been able to survive the subsequent Nazi attack. Due to the timescale, I think the question would be 'we're fighting for our lives, how can we be concerned about a bomb that might appear in two or three years?'

What was the Soviet Union's reaction to the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings?

The Soviet Union had very detailed intelligence about the Manhattan Project, but they appear not to have had any intelligence about the plan to use the bomb against Japan. It was a shock for Moscow, and a couple of weeks after the bombing of Hiroshima, Stalin signed a decree turning the small but growing Soviet nuclear project into a crash programme to develop the bomb as quickly as possible. They had actually received information about the design of the plutonium bomb, the type dropped on Nagasaki, and it was that design they decided to copy. And so the first Soviet test, which was in August 1949, was actually a copy of the Nagasaki bomb.



Has Russia the Atom Bomb?

BY HANSON W. BALDWIN
Military Analyst, New York Times;
Graduate, U. S. Naval Academy

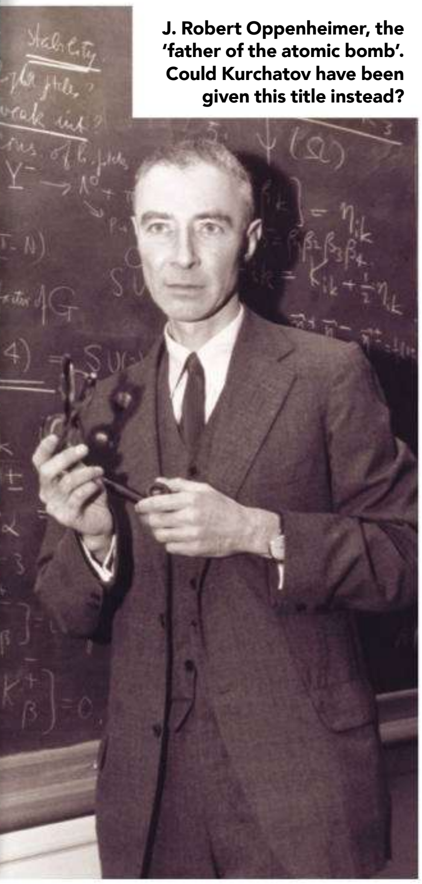
DOES Russia have the atom bomb?

Soviet Foreign Minister Molotoff and his mouthpiece Vishinsky have stated that the Russians know the "secret" of the bomb.

They undoubtedly do, but that does not mean that Russia has been able to build a bomb. In my opinion they have not produced an atomic bomb to date of writing—but they will. Intelligence information—unofficial and inconclusive but indicative—says "no bomb yet."

Our own experience in manu- *[Continued on page 62]*

60 *Mechanix Illustrated*



J. Robert Oppenheimer, the 'father of the atomic bomb'. Could Kurchatov have been given this title instead?

What would it have taken for the Soviets to develop the bomb first?
First of all, it would have taken a decision to invest in a very large industrial project to develop the bomb. Additionally, this decision would have to be taken before the summer of 1942, when the United States chose to go ahead with their project, and would have had to disregard any cost. Even for the U.S., that was a major decision taken largely on advice from scientists that not only would this be possible, but that maybe the Germans were already building one. In the Soviet Union, there wasn't that great trust between the leadership and the scientists.

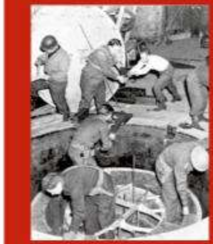
The second thing is that, even if they had made that decision, the war would still have changed everything. During the German attack all resources were devoted to defence. When Kurchatov was trying to set up his small laboratory, he could hardly get anyone to pay attention to him because everyone was under enormous pressure to fulfil different tasks for weapons production. He even writes a letter complaining about this to Beria.

Do you think ultimately we still would have ended up with a Cold War?
Yes, I think so. Because there was still the kind of fundamental ideological difference between the Soviet Union and the United States. The Soviet Union did see victory in the war as another step in the progress towards communism. However, I think the Cold War would have been different because the American monopoly on the bomb, or the great lead it had from 1949, made it much easier for the U.S. to make the commitment it did to the post-war defence of Europe. When Eisenhower decided European powers couldn't afford politically or economically to reach the troop levels NATO required, there was always the option to send nuclear weapons to Europe. But I think the fact of the American monopoly initially, and then its superiority in the number of weapons, made certain decisions easier for the U.S. than they would otherwise have been. And so the Cold War could have taken a different shape.

Do you think then we would be feeling the effects now or do you think we'd still be very much in the same world?
I mean, ultimately it would not have made much of a difference because we still would have had two sides with nuclear weapons. The United States would still have built up its nuclear forces; after all, it was economically and technologically more powerful than the Soviet Union. Its economy had not been damaged in the same way the Soviet economy was subjected to huge destruction during the war. So I think we still would have got to a point of probably strategic parity and mutual assured destruction, and then it would have been a rivalry of which system was better. So ultimately I don't think that the Soviet Union having more weapons initially would have made that much difference to the eventual outcome.

THE POSSIBILITY

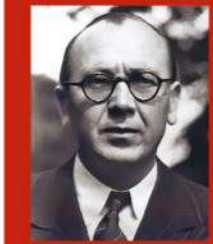
1938



The Nazi atomic project

While the Soviet Union most likely could not have developed an atomic weapon before the U.S., one possibility is that the Nazi project may have been successful before either of them. Nuclear fission was discovered in Berlin in 1938, creating panic in America that the Nazis were on their way to weaponising this discovery. Kurt Diebner was in charge of the project, but several scientific miscalculations meant the project lagged behind its American counterpart. The Nazi project relied on expensive heavy water, and when the key plant producing this material was destroyed, the project fell even further behind.

AUGUST 1945



Hiroshima & Nagasaki

On 6 and 9 August 1945, the United States detonated atomic bombs over the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, killing thousands. The next day, the Japanese Government agreed to a surrender. The decision by President Truman to use atomic weapons, not once but twice, remains a controversial and divisive one. However, if the Soviet Union had been able to develop an atomic weapon first, during World War II, would we have seen the devastating weapons detonated over Europe?

1948-1949

Nuclear Monopoly

The United States' monopoly on nuclear weapons after the end of WWII meant it could rely on the nuclear threat to help defend Europe. Indeed, during the Berlin blockade of 1948–49, a number of B-29 bombers were transferred to the area to demonstrate the willingness of the United States to use nuclear weapons against the Soviet Union if necessary. However, although David J. Holloway suggests the U.S. would always have been able to develop the number of weapons necessary for a monopoly, would they have been able to secure this hold on Europe?

All images: © Getty Images

WOMEN OF THE USSR

Meet some of Soviet Russia's most powerful women, from first ladies and political powerhouses to heroines of the Motherland

WRITTEN BY APRIL MADDEN

Traditionally Russia had not been a great place to be a woman, but in the 19th century its women's movement gained traction. The fact that many men were serving in the armed forces, combined with the middle- and upper-class focus on education, meant that by the turn of the 20th century many women were working in trades or becoming doctors, teachers, and, crucially, rights activists. It was a march on International Women's Day in 1917 that kicked off the Russian Revolution, so it seems odd to discover that the Bolshevik Government dissolved the movement soon after taking power. Ostensibly this was because women and men now stood on egalitarian, enfranchised footing, all able to vote and enter the workforce equally. In practice, however, radical new laws on marriage and personal freedom ran the risk of leaving abandoned wives destitute, resulting in a renewed legislative focus on domestic life, and by the 1940s a woman's traditional role at the heart of the nuclear family was once again culturally enshrined in Soviet life.

NADEZHDA KRUPSKAYA

1869–1939

The arresting gaze of Nadezhda Konstantinovna Krupskaya is perhaps what first attracted her husband, Vladimir Lenin. In this photo from the 1890s, this stern, self-possessed young woman fixes her eyes on the camera in much the same way as she must have done to disobedient pupils. The highly educated Nadezhda, like her husband, was of noble blood, but in the last days of empire her family had fallen from the Tsar's graces, and Nadezhda herself grew up in grinding poverty, working as a governess and a teacher to make ends meet. This gave her the passion for Marxism that drew her into Lenin's circles. Also passionate about the theories of Leo Tolstoy, she eschewed luxury and fashion. A school friend described her as "a tall quiet girl who did not flirt with the boys", and little is known of her early romance with Lenin. Nonetheless, after both were arrested for revolutionary activities, she was prepared to claim she was his fiancée in order to share his Siberian exile. But Nadezhda Krupskaya was much more than simply the wife of an influential man. She was pragmatic and powerful in her own right, a key organiser and intelligence operative of the Russian Revolution. After the revolution she turned her focus to education once more, advocating for literacy, access to libraries and public education for Soviet children and adults alike.

ALEXANDRA KOLLONTAI

1872–1952

Russia's first female cabinet minister and ambassador in her own right almost didn't make it into politics at all. As a young revolutionary, Alexandra Kollontai picked the wrong side of Soviet Marxism – she was a Menshevik, opposed to Lenin and his policies. Exiled from the Motherland in 1908, she went on a Western campaign trail, speaking out against WWI in Europe and the U.S. Soon, however, this passionate, multilingual young woman saw which way the wind was blowing for Russia, and in 1915 she joined Lenin and his Bolshevik comrades. She was still an agitator though, voting for the October Revolution, opposing Russia's withdrawal from the war she had once campaigned against and siding with the Worker's Opposition against the Communist Party's increasingly paranoid bureaucracy. This nearly saw her kicked out of the party for good – despite her jokes about "Stealing Lenin's silverware" on her way out her interrogation was a shock to the system, and in 1922 she wrote to Joseph Stalin, who had prosecuted her near-expulsion, to request a political role abroad. Here the young firebrand's unexpected talent for diplomacy was discovered, and by 1943 she was the Russian ambassador to Sweden, where she is credited with ensuring her host country remained neutral during the deadly Winter War between Russia and Finland.

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ROSALIA ZEMLYACHKA

1876–1947

Standing for office under the name 'Demon', the notorious Rosalia Zemlyachka may well have lived up to her party moniker. A hardline Leninist who had been involved in revolutionary activities since the age of 17, Rosalia was born into a wealthy Kiev family and studied at the faculty of medicine at the University of Lyon, France. She spent her early political life working for the communist newspaper *Iskra* and participating in congresses in Europe (she was arrested in, and deported from, Belgium in 1903). An exacting taskmaster who punished her comrades' failures with purges, she rose quickly through the Bolshevik ranks in the wake of the revolution. She reserved a special ire for White Russians, those who had been on the side of the Tsar, and by 1920 she was secretary of the Crimean party committee and involved with the Cheka secret police. Together with her lover, Béla Kun, the head of the Crimean committee, and Semyon Dukelsy, the local Cheka commander, she cooked up a plan to offer amnesty to the White Russian rebels who were fleeing the peninsula, having already made the decision to massacre those who surrendered. In the Massacre of the Wrangelites, named for the White Russian commander Baron Wrangel, up to 70,000 White Russian troops were brutally murdered – burned alive or drowned – apparently at Rosalia Zemlyachka's famously sadistic behest.

NADEZHDA ALLILUYEVA 1901–1932

Was Joseph Stalin a hero to Nadezhda Alliluyeva? For the youngest of four children from a peasant family, Uncle Joe was a family friend, and when she was a young child in Baku, now the capital of Azerbaijan, Stalin had saved her from drowning. Raised among revolutionaries thanks to her father's involvement with the Bolsheviks, at just 17 Nadezhda became the 40-year-old Stalin's second wife. Stalin made his new bride a secretary at the People's Commissariat for Nationalities, but by the time Lenin took power she was working for the Bolshevik leader and his wife Nadezhda Krupskaya, who, as an advocate for adult and peasant education, was sympathetic to Alliluyeva, who had left school early and consequently made numerous spelling errors in her work. Stalin was furious. Alliluyeva was eventually expelled from the Bolshevik Party after the birth of her first child, accused of laziness and incompetence. Desperate to be taken seriously, Alliluyeva petitioned for readmittance and pursued education while her children were raised by Stalin's family and a nanny. When Stalin succeeded Lenin as leader, she became the USSR's first lady, but by then her relationship with her husband had deteriorated badly. After being humiliated by Stalin at a drunken party dinner in the Kremlin, she shut herself in the couple's apartments and shot herself through the heart.

MARIYA OKTYABRSKAYA

1905-1944

Mariya Vasilyevna Oktyabrskaya was one of ten children born into a poor Ukrainian family in Crimea. In 1925, she married an officer in the Soviet Army and began to take a keen interest in his work. She became a military nurse, learned to drive and even took weapons training. Evacuated to Siberia in WWII, it took her two years to learn that her husband had been killed in the fighting. Selling everything she owned, she gave the proceeds to the Red Army to buy a tank, specifying that it was to be a T-34, that it was to be named Fighting Girlfriend – and that she was to be its driver. Initially her compatriots, the 26th Guards Tank Brigade, saw her as a joke – until they were sent in to recover Smolensk. Oktyabrskaya proved herself to be a deft and aggressive driver even in intense combat, manoeuvring her crew to take out artillery emplacements and machine-gun nests. When the tank was hit, Oktyabrskaya jumped out under heavy fire and made repairs herself. Unsurprisingly, she was promoted to sergeant. She repeated the same feat near Novoye Selo a few weeks later. It was her leaps into the fray that would eventually be her undoing: during a night attack in Krynki, after taking on trench fire and machine guns, Fighting Girlfriend was hit by an anti-tank shell. When Oktyabrskaya got out she was struck in the head by shrapnel. She spent two months in a coma before dying in a military hospital. She was buried with full military honours and declared a Hero of the Soviet Union.

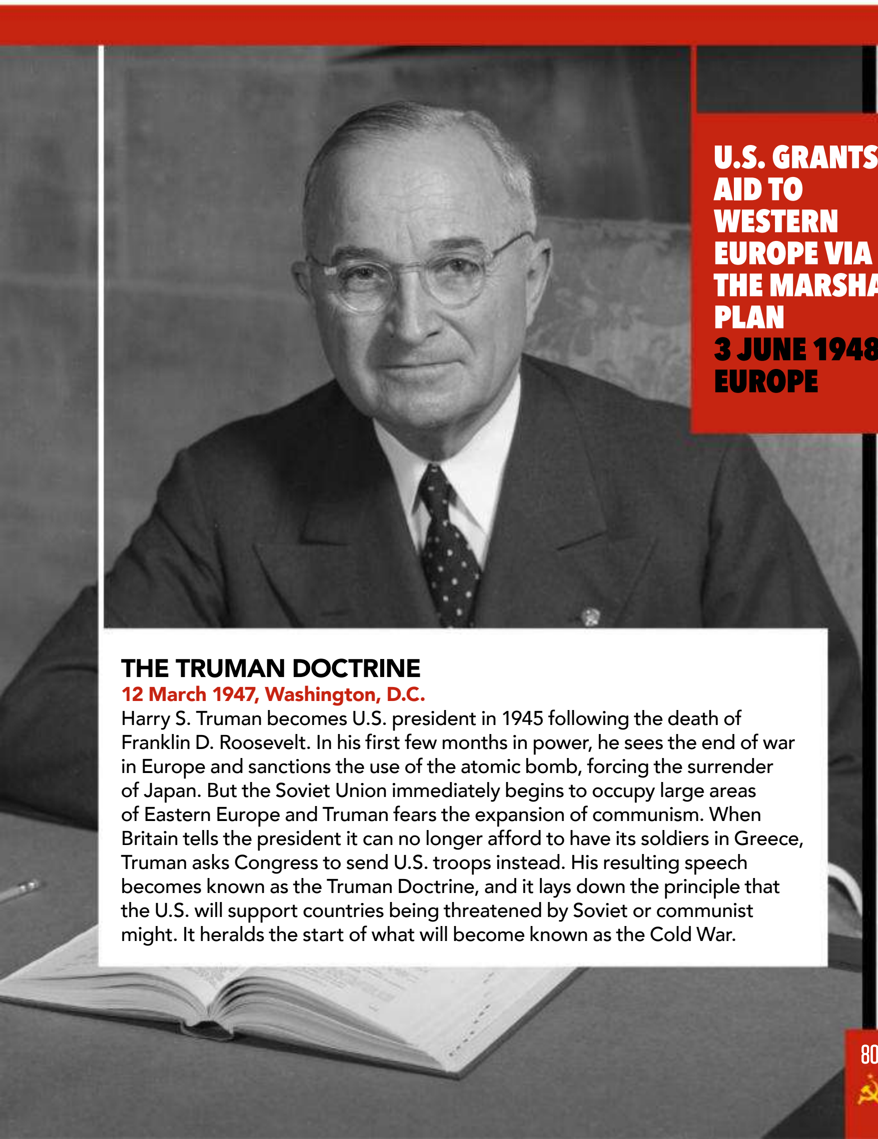
VALENTINA TERESHKOVA

1937-

One heroine of the Motherland's achievements are literally out of this world. In 1962, textile factory worker and hobbyist skydiver Valentina Tereshkova was selected to join the Soviet Union's female cosmonaut corps. The Space Race was getting increasingly heated, and after hearing about the unofficial 'Mercury 13' group of would-be female astronauts in the U.S., Russian director of cosmonaut training, Nikolai Kamanin, decided it would be an "insult to the feelings of patriotic Soviet women" if an American beat them to the title of first woman in space. Tereshkova and four others were selected from a pool of 400 candidates and put through intensive military, engineering, survival and air training. When it came to the final selection, Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev authorised the high-performing Tereshkova for flight, pleased with the propaganda potential of sending a woman into space who came from a collective-farm background and whose father had been killed in the Winter War. Lieutenant Tereshkova was launched into orbit on the Vostok 6 mission on 16 June 1963 and promoted to captain while she was in orbit. She is still the only woman to have made a solo space flight and still holds her record of having been the youngest woman in space, aged 26 at the time. Now in her 80s, she ranks as a major general in the Russian Air Force and is a first class active state councillor and member of the national State Duma for the ruling United Russia party.

FROZEN IN TIME:
KEY EVENTS OF THE COLD WAR

For 44 years, the U.S. and USSR endured a frosty relationship that split the world in two and took it to the brink of nuclear war



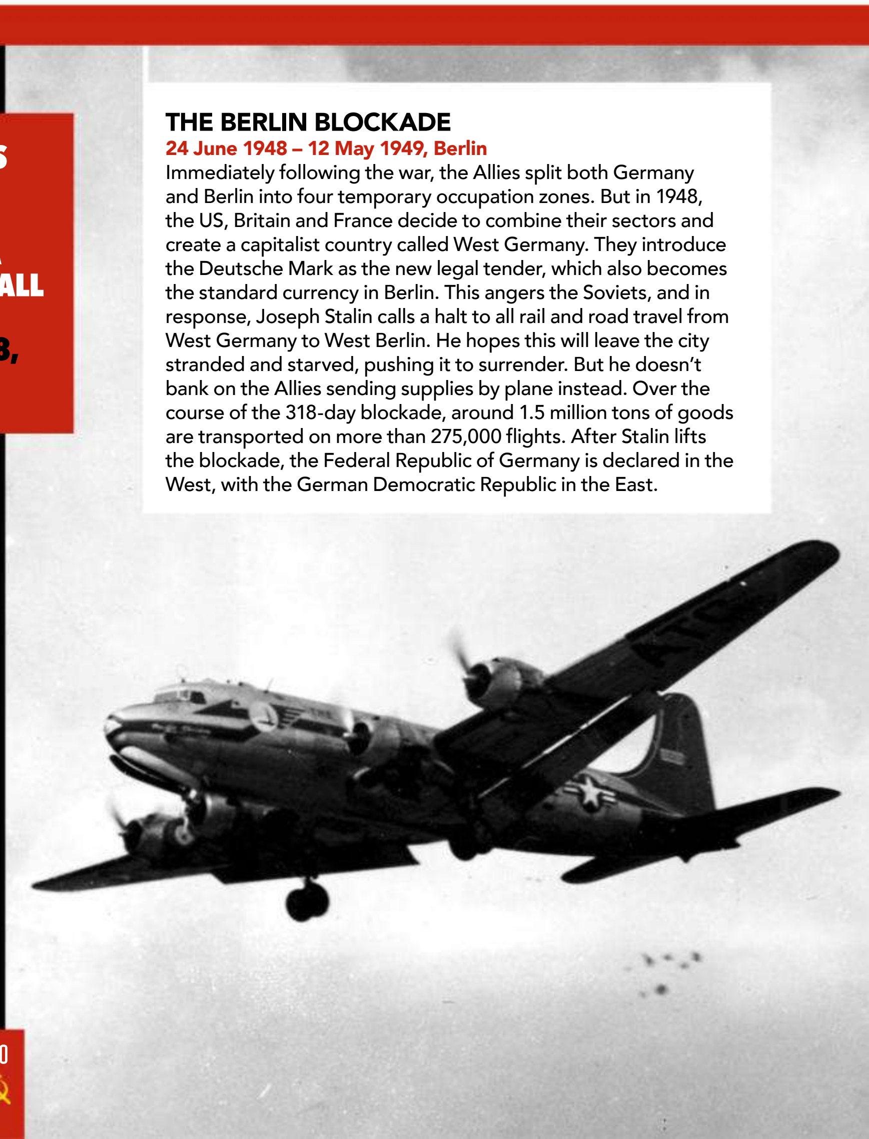
THE TRUMAN DOCTRINE

12 March 1947, Washington, D.C.

Harry S. Truman becomes U.S. president in 1945 following the death of Franklin D. Roosevelt. In his first few months in power, he sees the end of war in Europe and sanctions the use of the atomic bomb, forcing the surrender of Japan. But the Soviet Union immediately begins to occupy large areas of Eastern Europe and Truman fears the expansion of communism. When Britain tells the president it can no longer afford to have its soldiers in Greece, Truman asks Congress to send U.S. troops instead. His resulting speech becomes known as the Truman Doctrine, and it lays down the principle that the U.S. will support countries being threatened by Soviet or communist might. It heralds the start of what will become known as the Cold War.

U.S. GRANTS AID TO WESTERN EUROPE VIA THE MARSHALL PLAN

3 JUNE 1948, EUROPE



THE BERLIN BLOCKADE

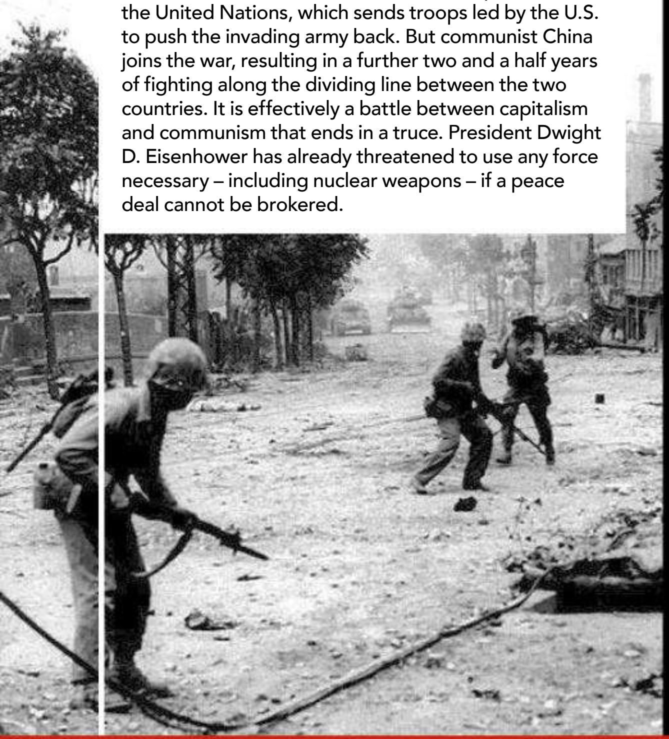
24 June 1948 – 12 May 1949, Berlin

Immediately following the war, the Allies split both Germany and Berlin into four temporary occupation zones. But in 1948, the US, Britain and France decide to combine their sectors and create a capitalist country called West Germany. They introduce the Deutsche Mark as the new legal tender, which also becomes the standard currency in Berlin. This angers the Soviets, and in response, Joseph Stalin calls a halt to all rail and road travel from West Germany to West Berlin. He hopes this will leave the city stranded and starved, pushing it to surrender. But he doesn't bank on the Allies sending supplies by plane instead. Over the course of the 318-day blockade, around 1.5 million tons of goods are transported on more than 275,000 flights. After Stalin lifts the blockade, the Federal Republic of Germany is declared in the West, with the German Democratic Republic in the East.

KOREAN WAR

25 June 1950 – 27 July 1953, Korea

When World War II ends, Korea is divided into two, with the Soviets and China controlling the north and the U.S. controlling the south. North Korean leader Kim Il-Sung wants to unite the two halves and, with the support of Russia and China, his soldiers invade South Korea in 1950. This galvanises a response from the United Nations, which sends troops led by the U.S. to push the invading army back. But communist China joins the war, resulting in a further two and a half years of fighting along the dividing line between the two countries. It is effectively a battle between capitalism and communism that ends in a truce. President Dwight D. Eisenhower has already threatened to use any force necessary – including nuclear weapons – if a peace deal cannot be brokered.



JOSEPH STALIN DIES OF A MASSIVE HEART ATTACK
5 MARCH 1953
KUNTSEVO, USSR

START OF THE SPACE RACE

4 October 1957

The United States has long believed that Soviet technology is years behind its own, so to say it is surprised when the USSR launches a satellite into space is an understatement. Sputnik 1 becomes the first artificial Earth satellite and sparks a long-running space race that will see the U.S. eventually declare an ambition to put a man on the Moon. There is also a fear that the Soviets will be able to use their long-range rocket technology to attack America with nuclear weapons. Many millions of dollars are spent fighting on this technological front of the Cold War, but the U.S. eventually wins when astronaut Neil Armstrong sets foot on the Moon in 1969.

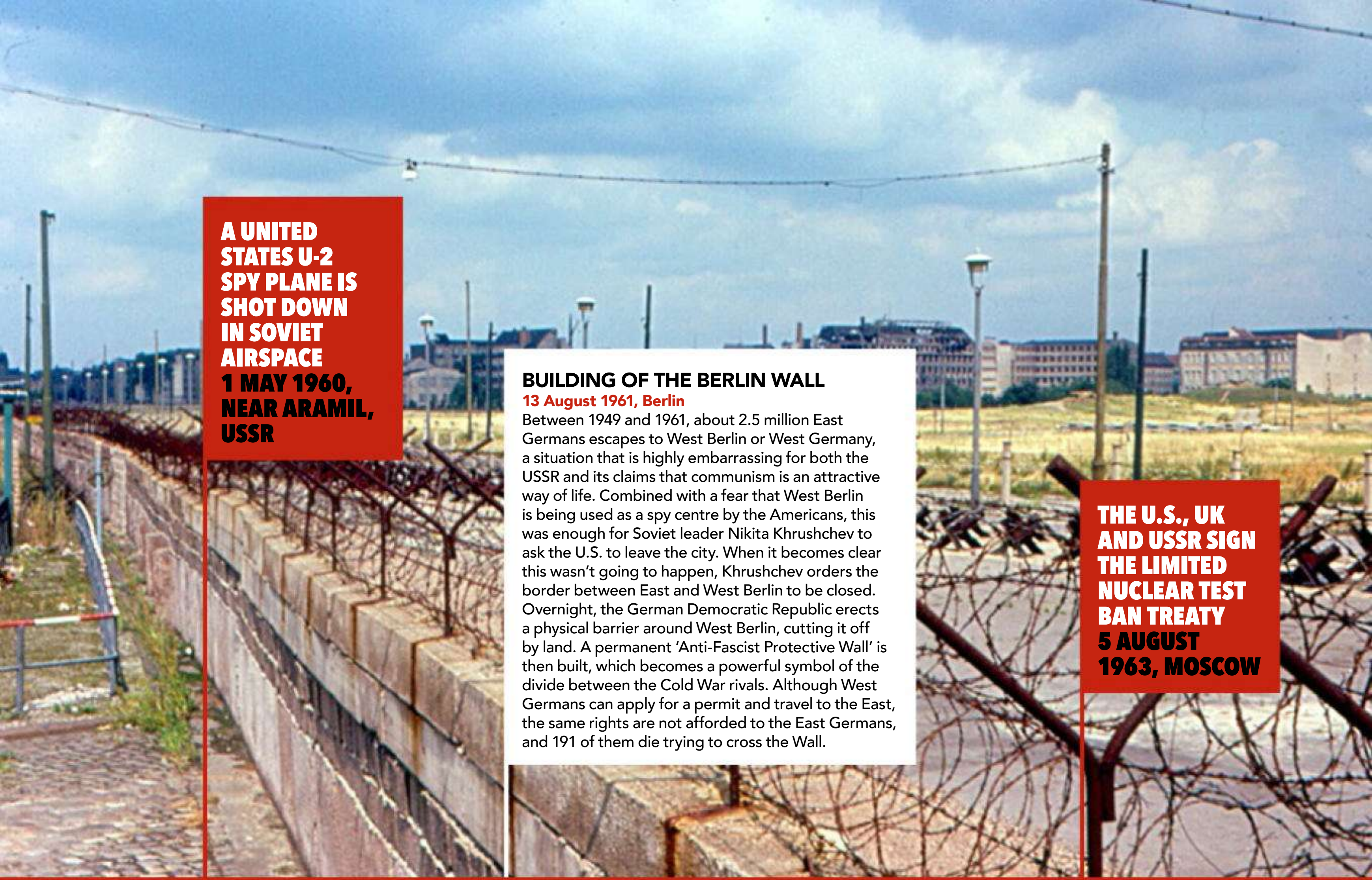
U.S. TESTS ITS FIRST HYDROGEN BOMB, PULLING AHEAD IN THE ARMS RACE
1 NOVEMBER 1952, PACIFIC OCEAN

THE USSR AND SEVEN SATELLITE STATES SIGN THE MILITARY WARSAW PACT
14 MAY 1955, MOSCOW

VIETNAM WAR

1954–1975, Vietnam

A second proxy war begins in Vietnam and lasts for 20 bloody years. It is a fight between the communist North, which is supported by the USSR and China, and the anti-communist South, backed by the U.S. The policy of opposing communism wherever it rears its head ensures America has to stick it out, even though the jungle terrain presents so many challenges. In the end, the U.S. loses the war, dealing a major blow to the containment of communism in Asia. The country is officially united in 1976 as the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, but not until 2 million civilians and 1.1 million soldiers have been killed.



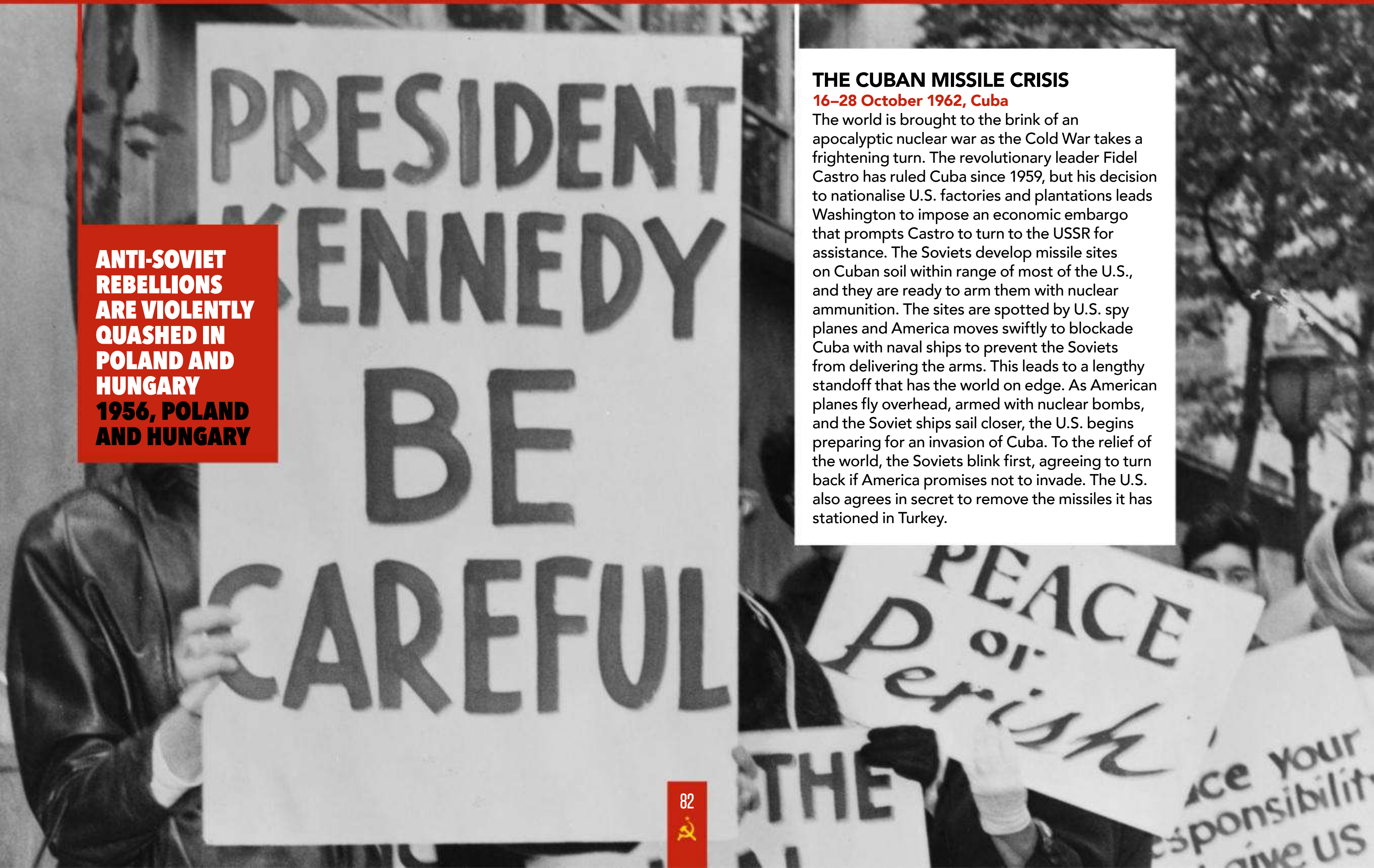
A UNITED STATES U-2 SPY PLANE IS SHOT DOWN IN SOVIET AIRSPACE
1 MAY 1960, NEAR ARAMIL, USSR

BUILDING OF THE BERLIN WALL

13 August 1961, Berlin

Between 1949 and 1961, about 2.5 million East Germans escapes to West Berlin or West Germany, a situation that is highly embarrassing for both the USSR and its claims that communism is an attractive way of life. Combined with a fear that West Berlin is being used as a spy centre by the Americans, this was enough for Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev to ask the U.S. to leave the city. When it becomes clear this wasn't going to happen, Khrushchev orders the border between East and West Berlin to be closed. Overnight, the German Democratic Republic erects a physical barrier around West Berlin, cutting it off by land. A permanent 'Anti-Fascist Protective Wall' is then built, which becomes a powerful symbol of the divide between the Cold War rivals. Although West Germans can apply for a permit and travel to the East, the same rights are not afforded to the East Germans, and 191 of them die trying to cross the Wall.

THE U.S., UK AND USSR SIGN THE LIMITED NUCLEAR TEST BAN TREATY
5 AUGUST 1963, MOSCOW


PRESIDENT KENNEDY BE CAREFUL
PEACE or Perish
THE
...ce your ...sponsibilit... ...ive US

ANTI-SOVIET REBELLIONS ARE VIOLENTLY QUASHED IN POLAND AND HUNGARY
1956, POLAND AND HUNGARY

THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS

16–28 October 1962, Cuba

The world is brought to the brink of an apocalyptic nuclear war as the Cold War takes a frightening turn. The revolutionary leader Fidel Castro has ruled Cuba since 1959, but his decision to nationalise U.S. factories and plantations leads Washington to impose an economic embargo that prompts Castro to turn to the USSR for assistance. The Soviets develop missile sites on Cuban soil within range of most of the U.S., and they are ready to arm them with nuclear ammunition. The sites are spotted by U.S. spy planes and America moves swiftly to blockade Cuba with naval ships to prevent the Soviets from delivering the arms. This leads to a lengthy standoff that has the world on edge. As American planes fly overhead, armed with nuclear bombs, and the Soviet ships sail closer, the U.S. begins preparing for an invasion of Cuba. To the relief of the world, the Soviets blink first, agreeing to turn back if America promises not to invade. The U.S. also agrees in secret to remove the missiles it has stationed in Turkey.

NUCLEAR NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY IS SIGNED

1 July 1968, New York

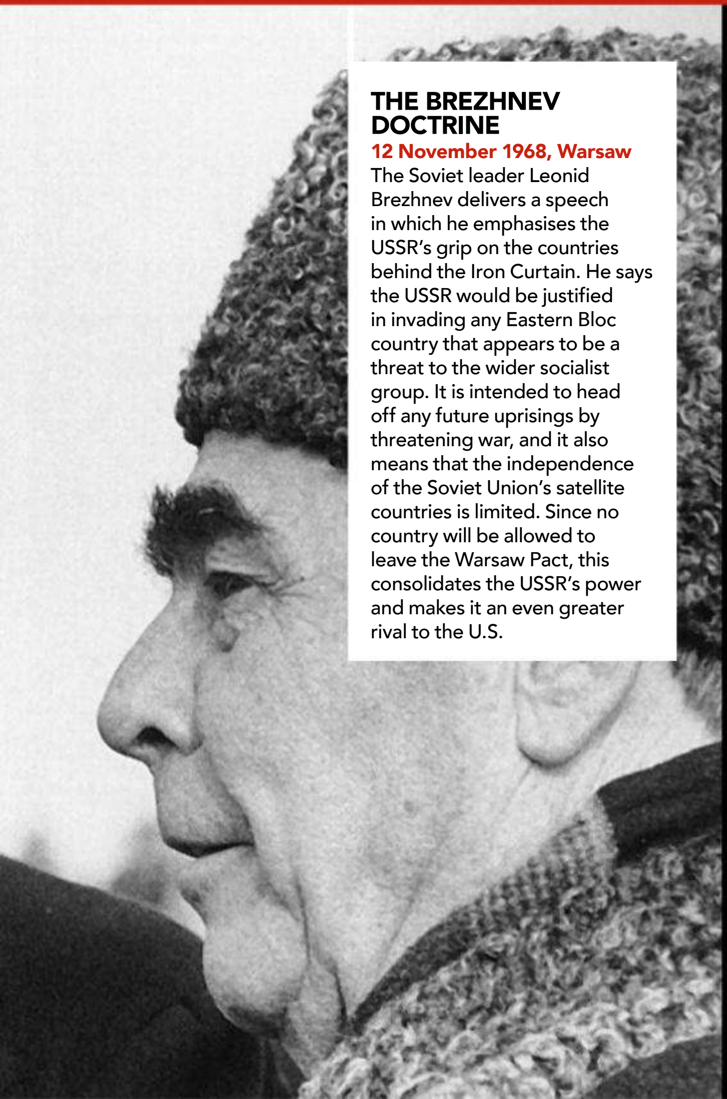
It is agreed that the spread of nuclear technology needs to be stemmed, and so the U.S. and the USSR sign an agreement that will prevent its proliferation. This is largely a self-serving move since the cost of nuclear arms development is proving to be rather costly for both sides, but when it comes into effect on 1 March 1970 it is nevertheless widely applauded. Under its terms, countries with nuclear weapons pledge not to sell or hand them to non-nuclear countries, and it has since become an important agreement that has been signed by most of the nine countries that possess nuclear arms.

CZECHOSLOVAKIA GAINS TEMPORARY FREEDOM FROM THE USSR

5 APRIL - 21 AUGUST 1968, CZECHOSLOVAKIA

NIXON VISITS CHINA FOLLOWING ITS ADMISSION TO THE UN

21 FEBRUARY 1972 - 28 FEBRUARY 1972, CHINA



THE BREZHNEV DOCTRINE

12 November 1968, Warsaw

The Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev delivers a speech in which he emphasises the USSR's grip on the countries behind the Iron Curtain. He says the USSR would be justified in invading any Eastern Bloc country that appears to be a threat to the wider socialist group. It is intended to head off any future uprisings by threatening war, and it also means that the independence of the Soviet Union's satellite countries is limited. Since no country will be allowed to leave the Warsaw Pact, this consolidates the USSR's power and makes it an even greater rival to the U.S.

AUGUSTO PINOCHET SEIZES POWER IN CIA-BACKED COUP

11 SEPTEMBER 1973, CHILE

THE HELSINKI ACCORDS

1 August 1975, Helsinki

The 1970s sees a thawing of the Cold War. In 1972, the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks places restraints on the USSR's and the U.S.'s central armaments, and in 1975 there was even a truce in the Space Race when Russia's Soyuz 19 and America's Apollo 18 docked. The Helsinki Accords of 1975 cement Europe's borders, form trade links between the two sides and gain a promise from the USSR to respect human rights. It boosts the spirit of détente, reducing tensions between the superpowers. The Moscow Helsinki Group is formed to monitor compliance – although members are threatened by the KGB.

Féd.
Rép. Dém. Allemande
Etats-Unis d'Amerique

CITIUS ALTIUS FORTIUS

THE MOSCOW OLYMPICS

19 July – 3 August 1980, Moscow

Sport is often embroiled in politics, and the Olympics are usually a good example of such things. Moscow is awarded the 1980 Olympic Games, but the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan results in the largest boycott in Olympic history. In total, 66 eligible countries decide not to attend (although it is feasible some pull out for other reasons). Among those refusing to participate are the United States, Canada and West Germany, although notable exceptions among Western nations include the UK, France, Italy and Sweden. Eastern Bloc countries retaliate in 1984 by boycotting the Olympics in Los Angeles, further highlighting the stark Cold War divisions.

THE INTERMEDIATE-RANGE NUCLEAR FORCES TREATY FORSWEARS GROUND-LAUNCHED BALLISTIC AND CRUISE MISSILES WITH A RANGE BETWEEN 500 AND 5,500KM (310-3,417MI)

8 DECEMBER 1987, WASHINGTON, D.C.

THE SOVIET-AFGHAN WAR

December 1979 – February 1989, Afghanistan

For nine years, the Soviet Union becomes bogged down in a war between the communist government of Afghanistan and insurgent rebel groups backed by the U.S. It is another proxy war that serves to show that the tensions between the Cold War rivals are still very much at the surface, and it not only costs the USSR millions of roubles but keeps tens of thousands of troops preoccupied in what is dubbed the 'USSR's Vietnam'. Soviet forces are eventually pulled out by Mikhail Gorbachev when it becomes clear that it is a war the USSR just cannot win. It is thought to have been a catalyst in the Soviet Union's eventual break-up.

RONALD REAGAN BECOMES PRESIDENT

20 January 1981 – 20 January 1989, Washington, D.C.

Former actor Ronald Reagan becomes the 40th president of the United States, and one of his first acts is to end détente. Dubbing the USSR an "evil empire" and calling for a rollback of communism to "write the final pages of the history of the Soviet Union", the Cold War is heightened under his reign. The firmly anti-communist leader devises the controversial Star Wars anti-missile program and escalates the arms race, re-authorising the production of neutron warheads for the Lance missile. But he sees hope when Mikhail Gorbachev becomes leader of the USSR in 1985, and the pair meet that November to seek a reduction in nuclear arms.

THE BERLIN WALL FALLS AS THOUSANDS GATHER TO CELEBRATE THEIR NEW FREEDOM
9 NOVEMBER 1989, BERLIN

THE COLD WAR ENDS

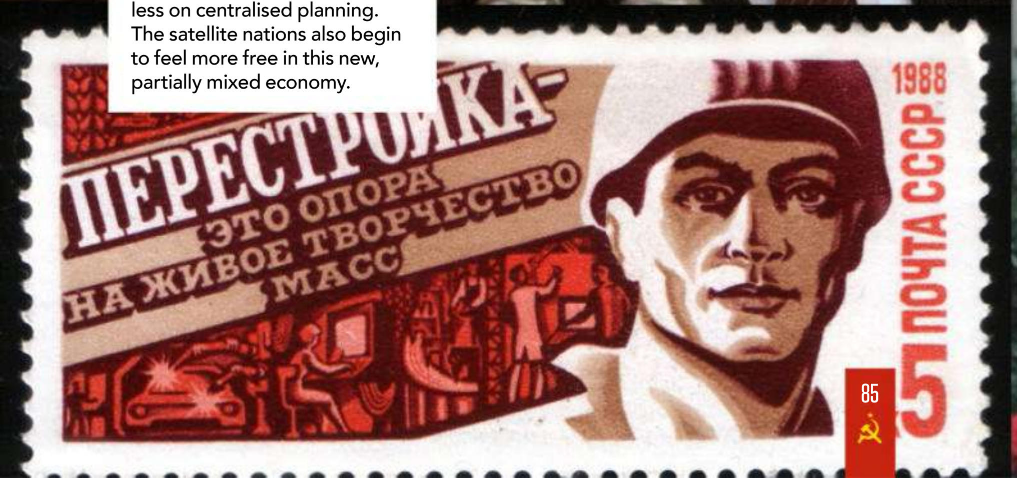
25 December 1991, USSR

With Boris Yeltsin having been elected president of Russia in 1990 and with revolutions taking place across Eastern Europe, communism is dealt a huge blow. In 1990, Germany is reunified, and in July 1991 the Warsaw Pact is dissolved. On 25 December 1991, George H. W. Bush receives his best Christmas present: a telephone call from Yeltsin to formally recognise the end of the Cold War. On that day, the USSR is also on its way to being dissolved and its hammer and sickle is lowered over the Kremlin. Gorbachev resigns as president of the USSR and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) is formed.

PERESTROIKA AND GLASNOST

1985, USSR

With Mikhail Gorbachev comes perestroika, a restructuring of the Soviet Union's political and economic system by the Communist Party, and glasnost, a policy of greater openness. Some within the party oppose such reforms, but it begins to open up the USSR to international markets while retaining socialism as a principle. It also helps Gorbachev achieve his aim of allowing Russia to catch up with its Western counterparts. As such, it sets in motion a feeling that change and prosperity is possible and a relaxation of the rules mean the USSR relies less on centralised planning. The satellite nations also begin to feel more free in this new, partially mixed economy.



© Getty

THE BERLIN WALL

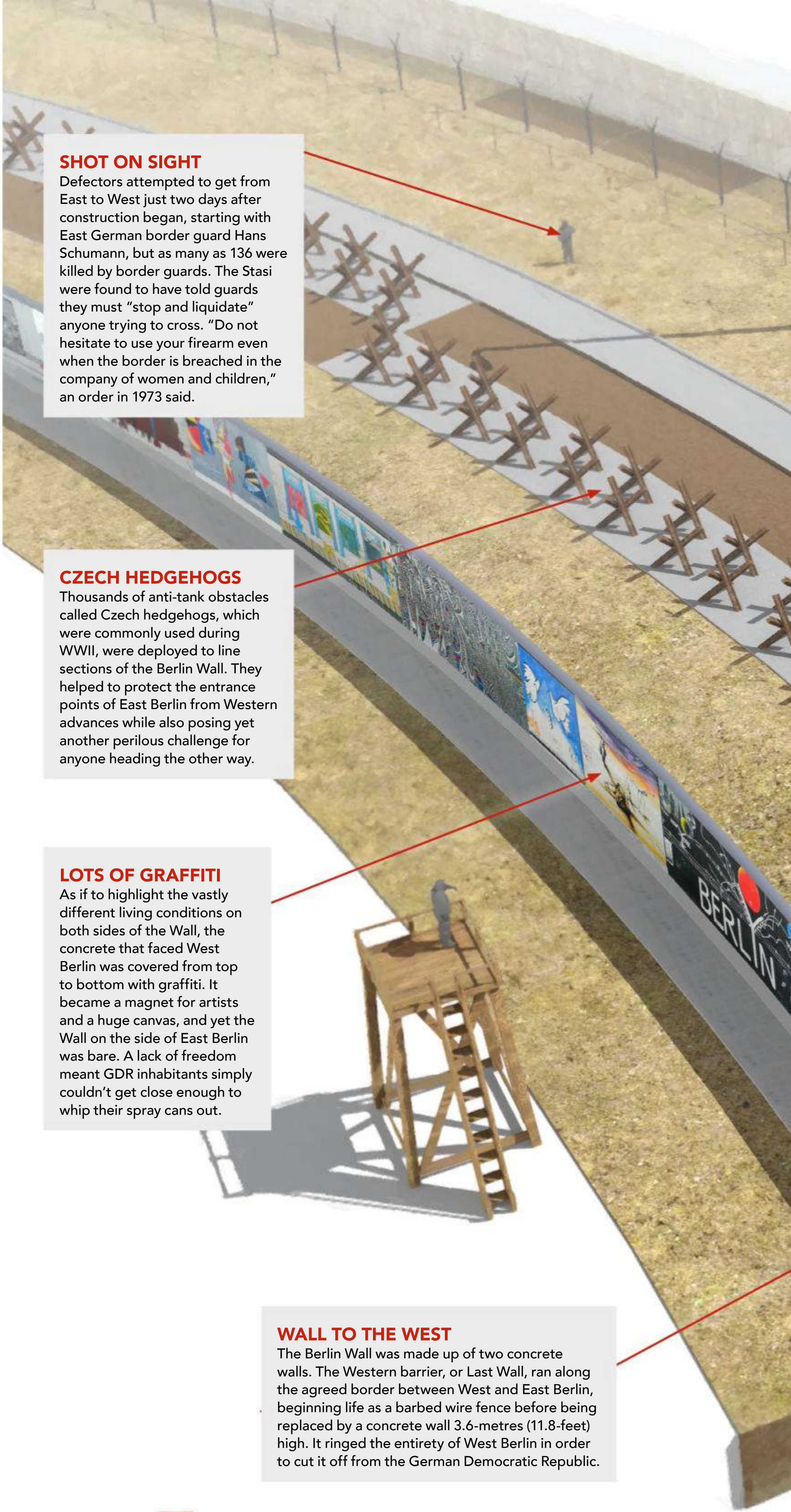
East Berlin, East Germany, 1961–1989

For 15 years, officials in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) had watched with growing anger as more than 2 million people fled to West Germany in search of a better life. Worried about the ongoing brain drain of the mainly young and educated defectors who were fleeing over the border between East and West Berlin, the Soviet Union – which had administered and occupied the GDR since its formation in 1949 – was asked to build a wall, and it finally relented in 1961.

Residents in Berlin woke to find their city physically divided. Barbed wire ringed the border of West Berlin, effectively creating a city-based island within the GDR. Days later, the wire was ripped down and replaced with concrete. Families and friends were being torn apart and kept separated by the Wall, but the governing Marxist-Leninist Socialist Unity Party of Germany set about fortifying it further.

Buildings bordering the Wall on the East side were torn down to create a strip that could afford guards uninterrupted views of anyone looking to escape. A second wall was later built providing even more of a barrier. The 155-kilometre (96-mile) strip of land it created around West Berlin became an area where fewer and fewer people would dare tread for fear of death. Dozens were fired upon for trying to escape as mistrust between East and West rose to an all-time high.

The Communist Party played down the Wall, saying it had been built to prevent a Western attack. Even so, it could see the damage it was causing. In the late 1970s and early '80s, many of the fortifications were removed, or at least hidden, and there were attempts to present a friendlier image to tourists. Some obstructions were gone by the time the Wall fell in 1989. Yet the foreboding steps that had been taken to curtail freedom highlighted the government's moral bankruptcy.

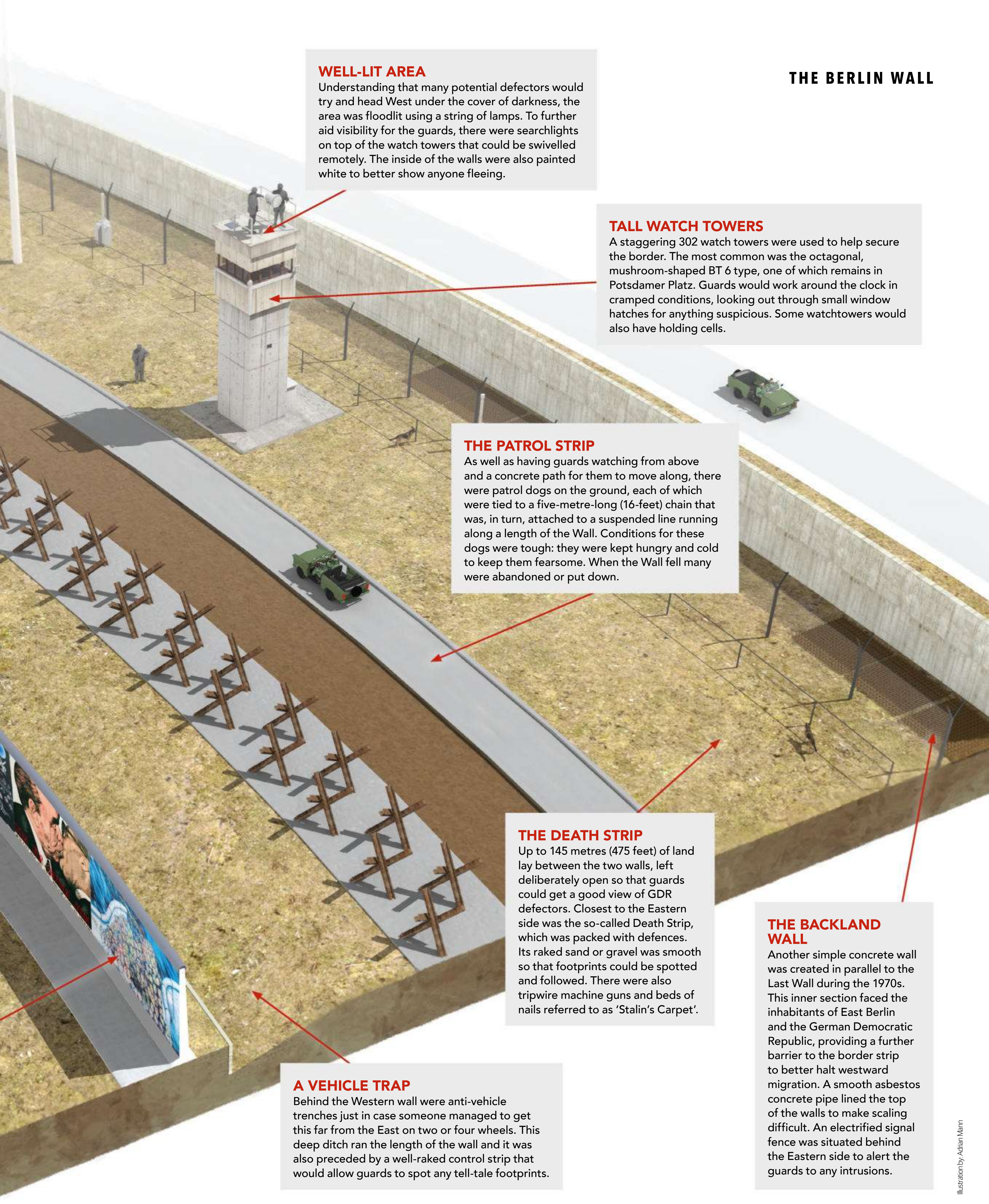


SHOT ON SIGHT
Defectors attempted to get from East to West just two days after construction began, starting with East German border guard Hans Schumann, but as many as 136 were killed by border guards. The Stasi were found to have told guards they must "stop and liquidate" anyone trying to cross. "Do not hesitate to use your firearm even when the border is breached in the company of women and children," an order in 1973 said.

CZECH HEDGEHOGS
Thousands of anti-tank obstacles called Czech hedgehogs, which were commonly used during WWII, were deployed to line sections of the Berlin Wall. They helped to protect the entrance points of East Berlin from Western advances while also posing yet another perilous challenge for anyone heading the other way.

LOTS OF GRAFFITI
As if to highlight the vastly different living conditions on both sides of the Wall, the concrete that faced West Berlin was covered from top to bottom with graffiti. It became a magnet for artists and a huge canvas, and yet the Wall on the side of East Berlin was bare. A lack of freedom meant GDR inhabitants simply couldn't get close enough to whip their spray cans out.

WALL TO THE WEST
The Berlin Wall was made up of two concrete walls. The Western barrier, or Last Wall, ran along the agreed border between West and East Berlin, beginning life as a barbed wire fence before being replaced by a concrete wall 3.6-metres (11.8-feet) high. It ringed the entirety of West Berlin in order to cut it off from the German Democratic Republic.



WELL-LIT AREA

Understanding that many potential defectors would try and head West under the cover of darkness, the area was floodlit using a string of lamps. To further aid visibility for the guards, there were searchlights on top of the watch towers that could be swivelled remotely. The inside of the walls were also painted white to better show anyone fleeing.

TALL WATCH TOWERS

A staggering 302 watch towers were used to help secure the border. The most common was the octagonal, mushroom-shaped BT 6 type, one of which remains in Potsdamer Platz. Guards would work around the clock in cramped conditions, looking out through small window hatches for anything suspicious. Some watchtowers would also have holding cells.

THE PATROL STRIP

As well as having guards watching from above and a concrete path for them to move along, there were patrol dogs on the ground, each of which were tied to a five-metre-long (16-feet) chain that was, in turn, attached to a suspended line running along a length of the Wall. Conditions for these dogs were tough: they were kept hungry and cold to keep them fearsome. When the Wall fell many were abandoned or put down.

THE DEATH STRIP

Up to 145 metres (475 feet) of land lay between the two walls, left deliberately open so that guards could get a good view of GDR defectors. Closest to the Eastern side was the so-called Death Strip, which was packed with defences. Its raked sand or gravel was smooth so that footprints could be spotted and followed. There were also tripwire machine guns and beds of nails referred to as 'Stalin's Carpet'.

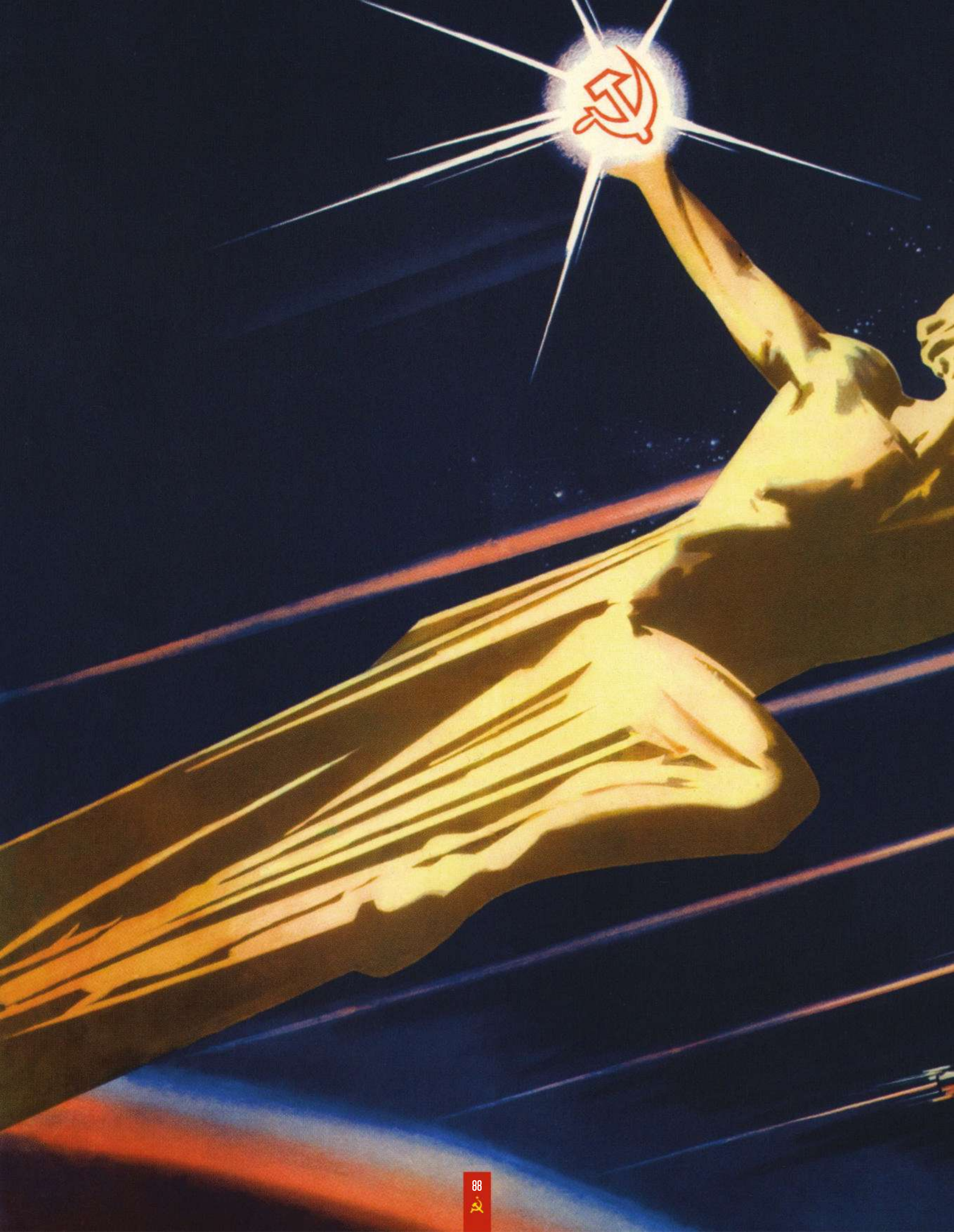
A VEHICLE TRAP

Behind the Western wall were anti-vehicle trenches just in case someone managed to get this far from the East on two or four wheels. This deep ditch ran the length of the wall and it was also preceded by a well-raked control strip that would allow guards to spot any tell-tale footprints.

THE BACKLAND WALL

Another simple concrete wall was created in parallel to the Last Wall during the 1970s. This inner section faced the inhabitants of East Berlin and the German Democratic Republic, providing a further barrier to the border strip to better halt westward migration. A smooth asbestos concrete pipe lined the top of the walls to make scaling difficult. An electrified signal fence was situated behind the Eastern side to alert the guards to any intrusions.

Illustration by: Adrian Mann



THE COSMONAUTS

How the USSR pioneered the age of human spaceflight

WRITTEN BY GILES SPARROW

The 1950s and early '60s saw the Soviet Union take a decisive lead in the new age of space exploration, leaving the United States trailing in its wake. So how did Soviet space scientists achieve so much, and why did the hammer-and-sickle flag never fly on the Moon?

The dawn of the Space Age came as a shock to almost everyone. U.S. plans to launch a satellite during the International Geophysical Year of 1957 to 1958 had been well publicised, but the Soviet space programme was widely assumed to trail far behind. So when Russian news agency TASS announced on 4 October 1957 that the beach ball-sized Sputnik 1 had successfully reached orbit, it shook long-held preconceptions of American technological superiority. By the time the U.S. launched its own satellite – Explorer 1 – in January 1958, the Soviets had also launched Sputnik 2, carrying a doomed passenger in the form of a mongrel dog, Laika.

One reason for the early Soviet advantage lay in the power of their launch vehicles and in their alternative use as ballistic missiles. Both Cold War rivals had poured resources into rocket programmes not out of a thirst to explore space, nor even for propaganda, but because rockets were a potentially unstoppable weapons-delivery system with which to threaten their enemies. The ultimate warhead for such a missile was a nuclear weapon, but while U.S. scientists had developed lightweight, super-powerful hydrogen bombs by the early 1950s, the Soviets were still reliant on much heavier, less powerful fission bombs, so from the outset they needed a larger missile capable of carrying heavier payloads.

Both U.S. and Soviet programmes used captured engineers and technology from Nazi Germany's wartime V2 missile project, but the Americans squandered an early advantage, allowing the work of the core German 'Rocket Team' (now on the payroll of the U.S. Army and led by the controversial Wernher von Braun) to become bogged down in inter-service politics. The Soviets, in contrast, had a home-grown genius to lead their effort in the form of Sergei Korolev, a brilliant and charismatic engineer who had helped pioneer Soviet rocketry in the 1930s.

Korolev was obsessed with using rockets for spaceflight, and as head of the OKB-1 engineering and design bureau, he played a skilful political game to convince Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev that a satellite would be a propaganda coup. But after his first success, he found himself under huge pressure to deliver more space 'spectaculars'. Sputnik 2 was an early response (although it's now clear that the Soviets lied about just how long Laika survived in space), and further satellites and probes continued to push the limits of space technology – but the next landmark achievement was clearly to put a human in space.

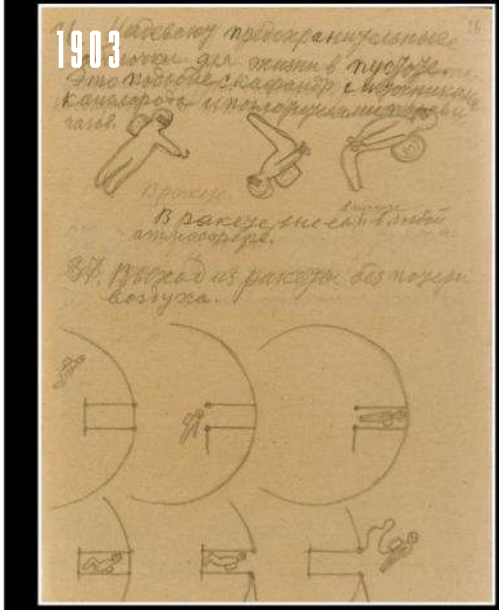
Korolev's team had begun designing a manned space capsule as early as 1955, but even with a suitable launch vehicle, the project was a formidable challenge. Launching a cosmonaut and bringing them safely back to Earth required development of a spacecraft capable of supporting a human being through the stresses of launch, protecting them for long periods in the vacuum of space, and shielding them from the fiery re-entry into Earth's atmosphere. The final design, known as Vostok, consisted of a spherical descent module housing the cosmonaut and a conical instrument module based on the Sputnik satellites.

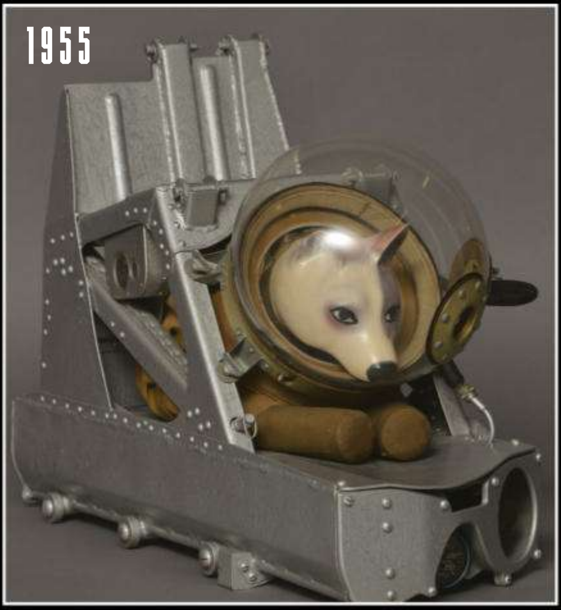
Just as important as the spacecraft were the cosmonauts who would travel in it. An initial group of 20 candidates were selected from among military jet pilots who volunteered for an unspecified test programme in 1959. Training was overseen by celebrated Soviet aviator General Nikolai Kamanin and included a huge range of endurance tests for gravity and space sickness, varying oxygen levels, extremes of temperature and isolated, confined conditions. The candidates also attended lectures on spaceflight, although these mainly focused on biomedical issues (despite the qualifications of the pilots, the Vostok missions were to be controlled entirely from the ground).

By June 1960, a core group of six cosmonauts were moved to the specially built Star City complex outside Moscow for more intensive training, including spacecraft simulations. Unmanned test flights also began, including some in which dogs were safely returned to Earth. Despite some later rumours, the Soviets were cautious about risking their cosmonauts' lives, and arguments continued until late March 1961 about the decision to launch. Once the go-ahead was given, Korolev and Kamanin's choice of pilot for Vostok 1 came down to two names: Gherman Titov and Yuri Gagarin.

Vostok 1 launched into space on 12 April 1961, orbiting Earth once in 108 minutes and writing Yuri Gagarin's name into the history books. Once again, the U.S. was left behind, delays in the development of boosters suitable for launching large spacecraft

SPACE RACE TIMELINE





USSR

1903
Russian schoolteacher Konstantin Tsiolkovsky publishes a breakthrough paper explaining the importance of rocket engines for space exploration. In dozens of books and articles, he sets out a vision for the space age, including multi-stage rockets, spacecraft and spacesuits, though he is largely ignored until after the Russian Revolution of 1917.

1950s
Soviet scientists use dogs as test subjects during rocket development. Most return to Earth safely, using bizarre devices such as this 'ejector seat' shown above. Laika, the passenger on Sputnik 2, is the only one to be launched with no hope of return, as a re-entry system cannot be developed in time to meet Khrushchev's demands for another quick spectacular.

October 1957
Sputnik 1 is launched using a three-stage rocket based on the Soviet R-7 Semyorka ballistic missile. It enters a highly elliptical orbit ranging from 215 to 939 kilometres (134 to 583 miles) above Earth's surface, sending back a signal that is picked up by radio operators around the world.

1961
Vladimir Chelomei proposes a rival Moon rocket to Korolev's.

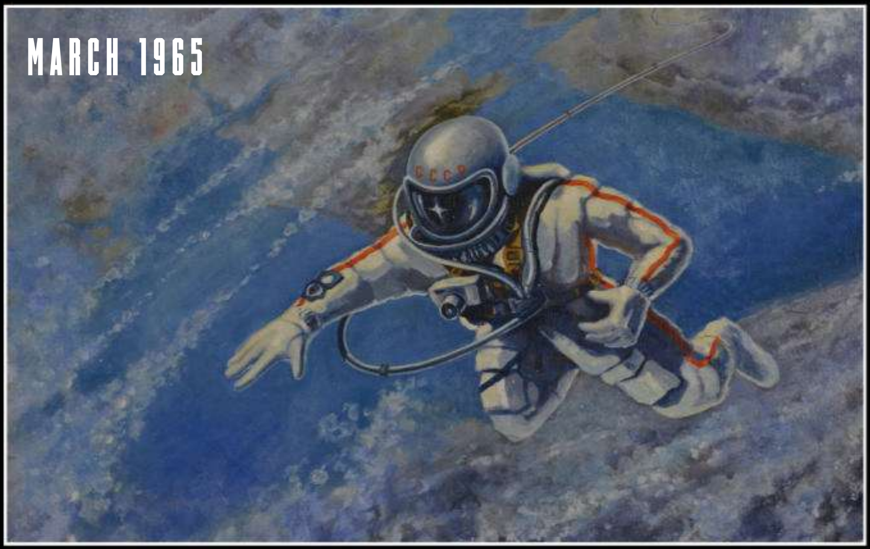
U.S.

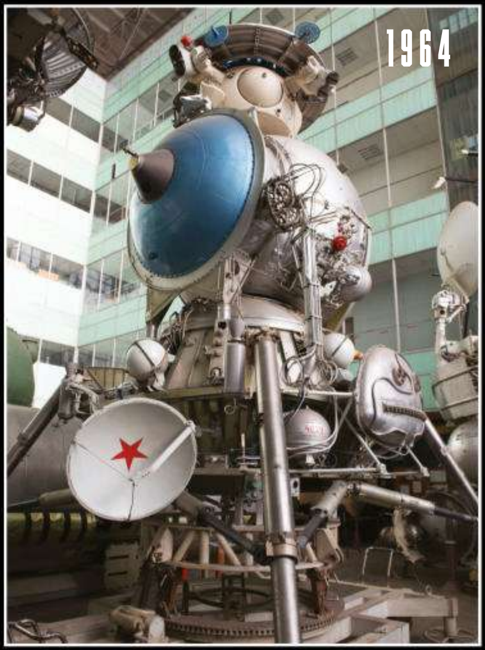
March 1926
U.S. engineer Robert H. Goddard launches the first liquid-fuelled rocket.

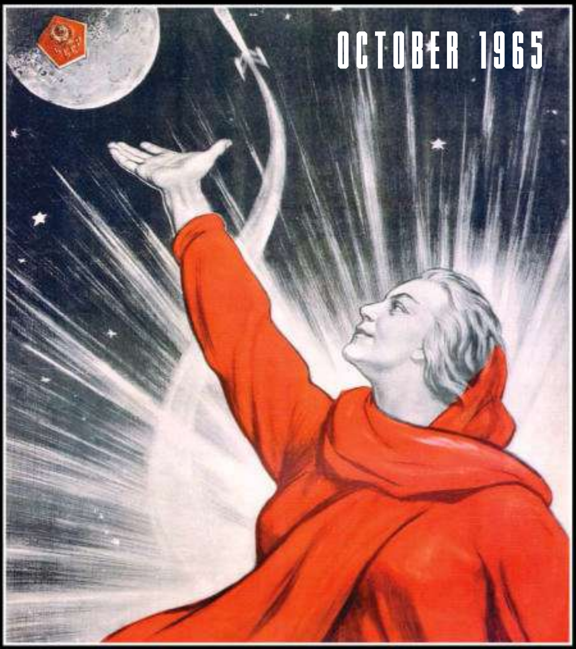
1945
Both U.S. and Soviet forces capture German rocket components and scientists.

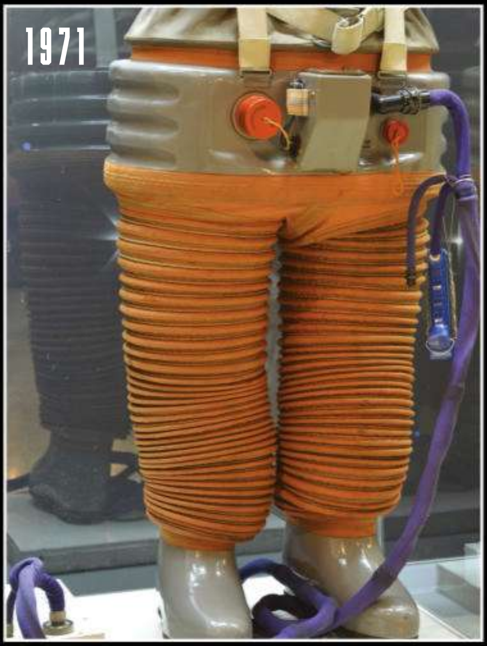
July 1955
The U.S. announces plans to launch a satellite in 1957–58.

January 1958
The U.S. launches the Explorer 1 satellite using Wernher von Braun's Juno rocket.









April 1961
Yuri Gagarin prepares for launch in the cramped confines of his Vostok 1 spacecraft. The ultimate choice of Russia's first cosmonaut may have been swung by Gagarin's peasant background, similar to that of Khrushchev, and deemed particularly fitting for a hero of the Soviet Union.

1964
The Lunniy Korabl lander is the focus of Korolev's lunar mission, planned to launch in combination with a Soyuz-based spacecraft using the huge N1 rocket. Unlike the two-man Apollo lander, the module plans to carry just a single cosmonaut to the Moon's surface.

March 1965
Alexei Leonov's daring spacewalk from Voskhod 2 proves to be the last of the Soviet space spectaculars. It nearly costs Leonov his life after his spacesuit inflates in the vacuum, leaving him unable to re-enter the capsule. He survives by opening a release valve that lets air escape from the suit.

October 1965
In an attempt to settle the infighting, the Soviet Government orders preparation for a manned lunar flyby mission by 1967, using Chelomei's UR-500 launcher and Korolev's Soyuz spacecraft, while work continues on the giant N1 launcher for a later Moon landing.

April 1967
The failure of Soyuz 1 further derails Soviet lunar plans.

1970
The Soviet Government begins cancelling manned lunar projects.

1971 onwards
The Soviet space programme begins to focus on long-duration spaceflight and orbiting space stations. Devices such as the Chibis suit are engineered to help cosmonauts remain fit in orbit; the suit is designed to pull blood and bodily fluids away from the torso, where they accumulate in microgravity conditions.

May 1961
President Kennedy announces the goal of putting a man on the Moon.

February 1962
John Glenn, one of the 'Mercury Seven', becomes the first U.S. astronaut to orbit the Earth.

March 1965
The first manned mission of NASA's Gemini program is launched to low-Earth orbit.

October 1968
NASA launches Apollo 7 to test the Apollo Command/ Service module (CSM) in orbit.

July 1969
The Apollo 11 mission puts American astronauts on the Moon.

“POLITICAL PRESSURE ON SPACE SCIENTISTS TO KEEP DELIVERING SHORT-TERM ‘FIRSTS’ WAS AN UNWANTED DISTRACTION”

READY TO FLY?

The selection criteria for the first cosmonauts were very different from those applied by today's Russian space programme

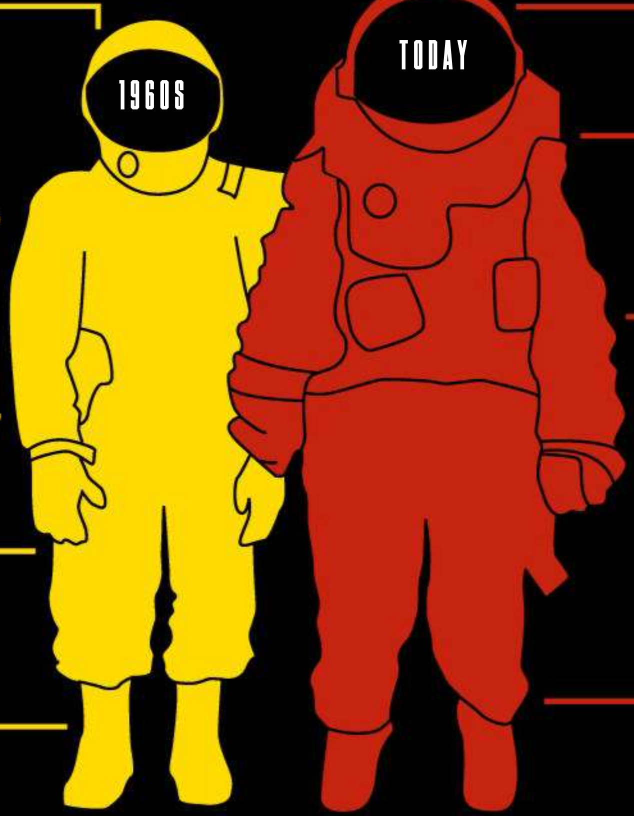
Military pilot
Although early cosmonauts were effectively passengers, jet pilots were considered well-suited to cope with the stresses of a spaceflight. Valentina Tereshkova, an experienced parachutist, was given an honorary Air Force rank before her mission.

Age below 30
Cosmonauts needed to combine their flight experience with relative youth, as no one could anticipate the physical effects of spaceflight.

Good health
Prior to selection, candidates were screened for chronic health problems. Even minor illness could threaten a pilot with substitution.

Party membership
Given the highly political nature of the Vostok missions, pilots had to be upstanding members of the Soviet Communist Party.

Weight and height
The first cosmonauts could be no more than 1.75m (5.7ft) tall due to the cramped spacecraft, with a maximum weight of 75kg (165lb).



Education
Today's cosmonauts are more likely to be skilled mission specialists educated to degree level or higher.

Health and age
There are no longer direct age restrictions, but candidates (including paying passengers) must display good health and physical fitness.

Height and weight
Today's Soyuz spacecraft can accommodate three cosmonauts with heights of up to 1.9m (6.2ft) and weights of up to 95kg (209lb).

Sponsorship
The Soyuz spacecraft often carries U.S. and European astronauts as well as Russians as part of partnership agreements with other space agencies. A few wealthy passengers have even paid for a ticket into space.

Training
Modern cosmonauts still undergo intensive training at Star City, working on spacecraft simulators and testing their endurance to the maxiumum on parabolic 'weightless' flights.

Early selection criteria Modern selection criteria

meant that their initial response, in early May, was to launch the Mercury Spacecraft Freedom 7 on a sub-orbital 'hop' piloted by Alan Shepard.

Korolev's team found themselves under increasing pressure to deliver further spectaculars. Titov finally flew aboard Vostok 2 for a whole day in August 1961, and a year later Vostoks 3 and 4 flew in space at the same time. In June 1963, another dual flight (Vostoks 5 and 6) saw Valentina Tereshkova become the first woman in space.

By this time, however, the rules of the game were changing. Shortly after Shepard's flight in 1961, U.S. President John F. Kennedy had given his country a long-term goal of reaching the Moon before the end of the decade. Korolev had similar ambitions and an advanced spacecraft design called Soyuz that he hoped could do the job.

But political pressure on space scientists to keep delivering short-term 'firsts' was an unwanted distraction, even if it maintained the image of Soviet space superiority. The final Vostok missions were followed by two risky Voskhod flights using a heavily adapted version of the original one-man spacecraft to set new landmarks. Voskhod 1 took a cramped three-man crew into orbit, while Voskhod 2 carried two men in full spacesuits, allowing cosmonaut Alexei Leonov to open the access hatch and become the first man to walk in space.

Another problem was the fragmented nature of the Soviet space effort. Rival designers worked in separate engineering bureaus, often refusing to cooperate with each other and constantly jostling for attention, political favour and funding. Throughout the early 1960s, priorities were constantly changing, with overlapping or contradictory projects being approved, merged and cancelled.

It was not until 1964 that Korolev was finally given overall control of the Soviet lunar programme. Development of the enormous N1 Moon rocket was formally approved in early 1965, but problems still continued, with numerous technical delays and obstruction from Korolev's rivals. By this time, Korolev's health had been failing for several years, and in January 1966 he died from complications during routine colon surgery at the age of just 59.

His death left the Soviet space programme rudderless. After the problems of the early 1960s it is doubtful that even Korolev could have beaten America to the Moon, but his successors certainly could not. Soviet ambitions to send cosmonauts to the Moon and beyond faded slowly, but perhaps the worst blow came in April 1967, when Vladimir Komarov died during the emergency re-entry of Soyuz 1 – a mission launched under intense political pressure with poor planning and an untested spacecraft. The Soviets had achieved so much, but their luck had finally run out.

Nevertheless, the Soviet space programme rose again. The problems with Soyuz were resolved, and it has since become the most successful and reliable manned launch system, allowing cosmonauts of the 1970s and 1980s to carry out increasingly ambitious missions to a series of Salyut and Mir space stations.

Following the fall of the Soviet Union, the rival design bureaus were finally unified in 1992 under a single space agency named Roscosmos. OKB-1, Korolev's former bureau, today continues as the private company RSC Energia, the prime contractor for Russian manned spaceflight. As a result, its legacy continues to survive on board the International Space Station and in the spacecraft that crew and supply it today.

© Alamy; Getty Images; ROSIZO; Russian Academy of Sciences ; The Museum of Cosmonautics; The Science Museum

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БЕНЗИН
НЕ КУРИТЬ
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PUMPED UP

For decades, the Soviet authorities viewed private car ownership as an indulgent waste of precious resources. It wasn't until the early '70s that the automotive market gradually began to open up. Even then, buying a car was a protracted ordeal, one that required a citizen to apply to their local trade union for a purchase permit. Assuming it was granted, the buyer then took their permit and around 5,000 roubles (around three years' wages for most) to purchase a Lada, the only Soviet distributor of affordable cars. In time, the USSR would become a major automotive manufacturer.

© Getty Images

13 DA ARMAG

YS TO
EDDON

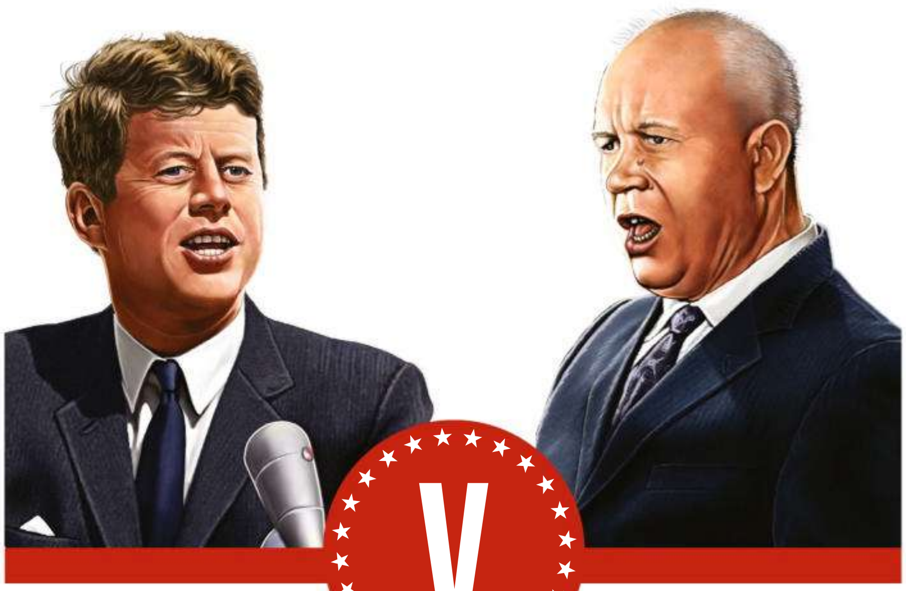
WRITTEN BY
OWEN WILLIAMS

At the height of the Cold War, Cuba became the centre of a deadly face-off between the Soviet Union and the United States

USAF
USAF
USAF
PRESIDENT OF TH

In October 1962 the world almost ended. At the height of the Cold War, the United States of America and the Soviet Union found themselves in a tense standoff over Soviet medium and intermediate-range ballistic missiles being stationed in bases in the rebellious Republic of Cuba. Over a terrifying 13 days the two superpowers came to the brink of nuclear war, with their mutually assured destruction looking alarmingly possible. To the Soviets, this dark chapter of their history is referred to as the Caribbean Crisis. To the Cubans it's the October Crisis. But to America and much of the rest of the world, the words 'the Cuban Missile Crisis' are the ones that invoke that particular chill of almost unimaginable horror only narrowly averted.

By the time of the crisis the United States and Soviet Union had been engaged in their Cold War for almost 20 years, ever since the end WWII (some trace it back even further to WWI). Not a conflict in the usual sense, it had mostly been an affair played out through espionage rather than military force, although the superpowers had each involved themselves in regional wars in China, Greece and Korea. After 1945, the single-party Marxist-Leninist Soviet state found itself in complete



KENNEDY V KHRUSHCHEV

POLITICAL STANCE

Democrat John Fitzgerald Kennedy became president in 1960. He aimed to end racial segregation in schools and public places and liberalised immigration laws. He strengthened unemployment benefits and called on the nations of the world to band together to fight poverty, hunger and disease. He also urged Americans to be active citizens, famously saying, "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country."

Khrushchev was first secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union from 1958 until 1964. He was responsible for moving the party away from Stalinism, ending forced labour and closing the Gulags. He was an early backer of the Soviet space program and was behind some relatively liberal domestic policies, such as allowing more freedom to the arts and opening up the opportunity for ordinary Soviets to travel abroad.

FOREIGN POLICY

With his presidency at the height of the Cold War, Kennedy was a vehement anti-communist. He fought communism in developing nations and inaugurated the Space Race as much from a perceived necessity to beat the Soviets to the Moon as for the scientific achievement. As well as the Cuban Missile Crisis, Kennedy's administration intervened in Vietnam. After Cuba, Kennedy's America negotiated a nuclear test ban treaty with the USSR and the UK.

The Soviet premier appointed himself as head of the USSR's UN delegation in 1960, where he was accused of a double standard: claiming to oppose colonialism while at the same time attempting communist domination of Eastern Europe and Southeast Asia and the Third World. Achieving the first manned space flight led the world to infer the USSR's nuclear weapons programme was further ahead than it was. Khrushchev was happy not to disabuse anyone of that notion.

MILITARY EXPERIENCE

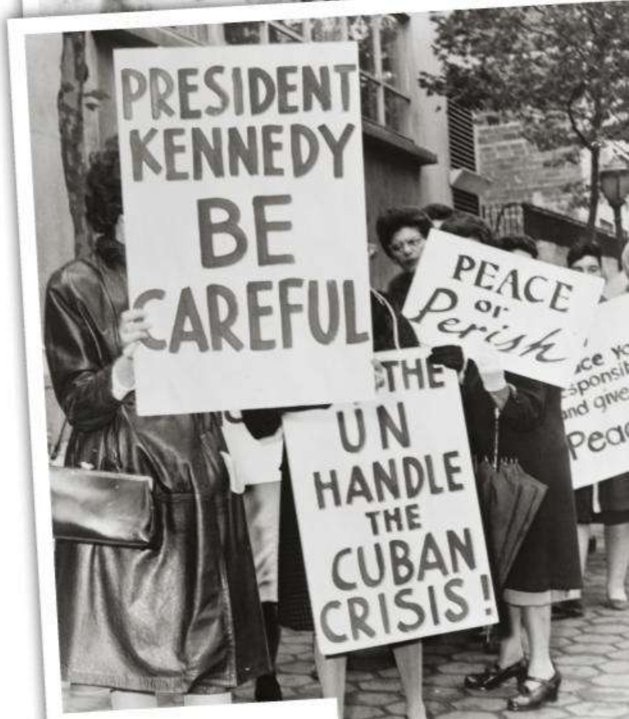
He served in the U.S. Navy from 1941 until 1945. He was working in the office of the secretary of the Navy when the attack on Pearl Harbor took place, but he subsequently saw action in Panama and the Pacific, commanding torpedo boats and achieving the rank of lieutenant. He received the Purple Heart and the WWII Victory Medal among several other decorations. He was finally released from active service due to a recurring back injury.

He served in the Red Army as a political commissar, both during the Russian Civil War (1917–1922) and WWII. The rank was roughly equal to that of a unit commander, but the commissar had the authority to countermand the commander's orders when he deemed it necessary. Khrushchev's primary function was as a political intermediary between troops and Moscow. He did see action at the Defence of Stalingrad in 1942, a source of immense pride.

ADVISORS

Among Kennedy's main advisors were Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson, Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Secretary of Defence Robert S. McNamara, and his attorney general and brother, Robert F. Kennedy. During the Cuban Missile Crisis Kennedy convened the special advisory committee EXCOMM, including all of the above, ambassador to the Soviet Union, Llewellyn Thompson, and members of the CIA and the Defence Department.

Extraordinary as it seems, Khrushchev, after rising to power, decided Soviet policy alone without any recourse to advisors at all. This could, of course, be viewed as a weakness since it cut off the input of others, which may have been valuable. But it also allowed his instincts free reign: a positive thing in regard to the Cuban Missile Crisis, where his levelheaded inclination toward peace and negotiation arguably averted a global catastrophe.



These demonstrators were part of the 'Women strike for peace' movement in 1962

A group of Cuban soldiers who helped in fighting off the Bay of Pigs invasion

THE BAY OF PIGS

The failed invasion that led to the Crisis

Why it happened

- Concern in the U.S. over the new left-wing direction of Cuba's politics after the removal of dictator Fulgencio Batista by revolutionary Fidel Castro.
- U.S. concern over trials and executions of Batista supporters.
- Castro was an outspoken critic of the U.S.

What went wrong?

A damning CIA report from November 1961 outlined a catalogue of points that made the attempted invasion doomed to failure. Its author, Inspector General Lyman B. Kirkpatrick, identified that there were no policies or contingency plans in place should the invasion have succeeded. Insufficient and poorly managed staff had been assigned to the project, relatively few of whom even spoke Spanish. U.S. intelligence in Cuba had been improperly analysed. There had been little success in organising internal resistance in Cuba or involving exiles from the Castro regime or counter-revolutionaries. And the operation had simply been too big, jumping from covert guerrilla action to full-blown military intervention in a way that made 'plausible deniability' completely impossible.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

PRELUDE TO INVASION
16 April 1961
The U.S. mounts diversionary activities around other Cuban locations to disguise its true intentions. These include the 'Phony War' of 16 April around Baracoa and Guantánamo. Cuban revolutionary military forces scramble to meet their U.S attackers, putting up more of a fight than expected.

DAY ONE
17 April
US troops (around 1,400), four transport ships and a fleet of smaller fibreglass boats enter the Bay of Pigs. Cuba responds with fighter jets and bombers. U.S. paratroopers are dropped onto the island but land in a swamp and lose all their equipment. Osvaldo Ramírez, leader of the Cuban resistance against Castro, is captured and executed.

DAY TWO
18 April
Cuban troops and tanks force the invaders and resistance into retreat in several areas. CIA pilots in B-26 bomber planes use bombs, napalm and rockets against Cuban targets, causing civilian casualties alongside their intended police and military victims.

DAY THREE
19 April
Four U.S. airmen are killed when Cuban forces mount a spirited defence against another CIA air attack. Anti-Castro forces on the ground, with their air support lost and ammunition running low, retreat in the face of a Cuban onslaught and have to be evacuated. The U.S. withdraws from the invasion.

THE AFTERMATH
20 April onward
U.S. destroyer ships search for survivors along the Cuban coast while intelligence-gathering flights continue. Hundreds of executions take place in Cuba in retaliation against the opposition, and Castro gloats over his prisoners of war. He offers the U.S. a deal to exchange them for tractors. They eventually get food and medicine instead.

ideological opposition to America's 'free' capitalist society, consolidating its control over the Eastern Bloc while the United States tried to contain it through international initiatives like NATO. Having wrestled for control and influence in Latin America and the decolonising states of Africa, the Middle East and Southeast Asia in the intervening years, events between the two sides came to a long-threatened head in Cuba.

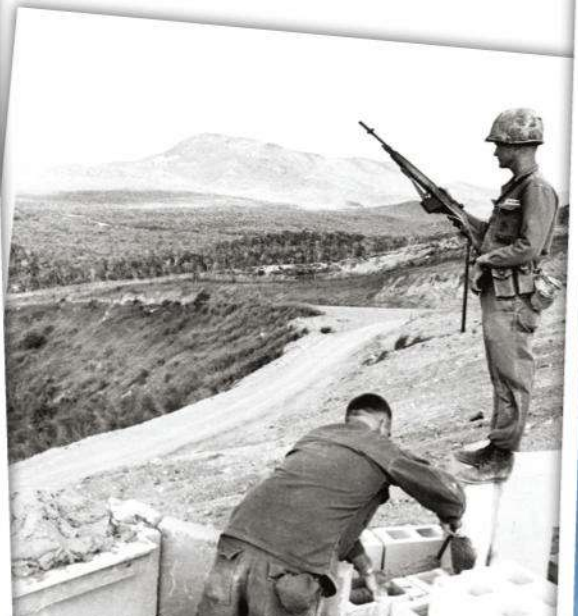
The immediate roots of the Cuban Missile Crisis lay in Cuba's regime change of 1959, a revolution that ousted incumbent dictator Fulgencio Batista and installed the communist commander in chief of the Cuban Revolutionary Army, Fidel Castro, as prime minister and later president. As supporters of Batista and other Latin American dictators, the U.S. Government suddenly found itself on the receiving end of harsh criticism from Castro when he opened diplomatic relations with them. Their response was a failed attempt to assassinate him, after which Castro demanded the complete withdrawal of the U.S. military from Guantánamo Bay. They refused and remain there; as of May 2024, its detention camp is home to 30 inmates.

Castro travelled to the U.S. in the spring of 1959 to meet with President Dwight D. Eisenhower, but he was snubbed by him and only met with Vice President Richard Nixon. Their meeting did not go well, and Castro further alienated the U.S. when he announced to the United Nations that Cuba would maintain a neutral position in the fractious relationship between America and the USSR. Subsequent policies that redistributed Cuba's wealth were predictably unpopular with Americans who owned land there and were seeing it removed from them at rates of compensation they were unhappy with. The CIA launched another failed assassination attempt against Castro, and the U.S. military began launching secret bombing raids against Cuban sugar facilities in October 1959, targeting one of its most lucrative exports. American attacks on Cuban oil refineries and civilian targets in Havana followed, all of which the U.S. officially denied.

Castro signed a trade deal with Soviet Deputy Prime Minister Anastas Mikoyan in February 1960, hoping it would gain him more leverage in the U.S. The opposite was true, and Eisenhower, pushed to the limits of his patience with the upstart Cuba, ordered the CIA to overthrow the republic. Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev publicly came out in support of Cuba; America launched yet another three failed assassination attempts against Castro,

> "ASSASSINATION ATTEMPTS AND ATTACKS ON HAVANA TOOK PLACE, ALL OF WHICH THE U.S. OFFICIALLY DENIED"

Adlai Stevenson II showing photos of nuclear missiles in Cuba to the UN Security Council



Strategic Air Command personnel looking at reconnaissance photos

A Neptune warplane flying over a Soviet transport ship in October 1962

THE LONGEST 13 DAYS IN HISTORY

A day-by-day account of the events of the Cuban Missile Crisis

16 October
President Kennedy and his staff are briefed on recon photos of Soviet missile bases under construction in Cuba. Kennedy maintains his public schedule while covertly discussing whether to launch air strikes against Cuba or a blockade of its coasts.

17 October
Kennedy continues his official public engagements, feeling it important to keep up appearances rather than arouse alarm. He has lunch with Crown Prince Hassan of Libya and visits Connecticut in support of Democratic election candidates.

18 October
Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko insists that Russia's aid to Cuba is purely in the cause of defence and represents no threat to the U.S. Kennedy warns Gromyko of grave consequences should Soviet nuclear weapons be found on Cuban soil.

19 October
Kennedy heads out on the congressional campaign trail to Ohio and Illinois, as previously scheduled before the missile crisis surfaced. Debate continues to rage among his advisors as to the best course of action in Cuba as Kennedy travels.

20 October
Kennedy returns to Washington, and after an intense five hours of deliberation, the plan to blockade – or quarantine – Cuba is finally decided upon. Work begins on the military and naval plans and on drafting a speech to inform the public of dire the situation.

21 October
Another day of meetings and phone calls on both sides. Tactical Air Commander Walter Sweeney advises Kennedy that an air strike against Cuba could not guarantee the destruction of all the Soviet missiles on the ground.

U.S. AIR FORCE

Nuclear missiles like this Jupiter rocket were placed in Turkey and Italy

which included sending him a box of poisoned cigars that were in fact delivered to an unknown person and a truly wild plot to blow him up with an sea shell packed with explosives.

By April 1961, America had both imposed full trade and economic sanctions against Cuba and undertaken a covert attempted invasion. The newly elected president, John F. Kennedy, continued to deny any such activity, but by now the American press were on the case and the word was out. Khrushchev warned that the Soviets would intervene against any aggression from the U.S. towards Cuba, and America, after the death of 200 of its soldiers and the loss of a further thousand as prisoners of war in the Bay of Pigs debacle, was forced to call off its incursion. Kennedy and his government had been thoroughly humiliated.

Beginning to see Kennedy as weak, Khrushchev and the Soviets used the lull to seize an opportunity. In August 1962, reports began reaching the U.S. from Cuba that Soviet trucks loaded with suspicious equipment had been seen on the island. As retaliation for the U.S. installing its own nuclear missiles close to the USSR, the Soviets were doing the same in the Caribbean: a sizeable arsenal of SS-4 nuclear warheads had been installed on the island, capable of reaching the U.S. East Coast, including the political hub of Washington, D.C. While initially claiming they were simply providing non-nuclear surface-to-air missiles for Cuba's defence against its hostile neighbours, Khrushchev's real agenda was to gain a stronger political foothold both against the U.S. and its allies in Britain and Europe.

Kennedy's response was to set up EXCOMM – the Executive Committee of the National Security Council – which suggested six options. Doing nothing was obviously impossible, but diplomacy was already not working; threatening Castro generally achieved the opposite of the desired effect; and either war with or the occupation of Cuba was an enormous risk. The ultimate decision, then, was to blockade the island, although for legal reasons (it would be considered an act of war) this was sold as a 'quarantine' of Cuba.

At 7 p.m. on 22 October 1962, Kennedy announced on U.S. television and radio that this 'quarantine' of Cuba was in effect immediately, stopping the shipment of all offensive military equipment to Cuba. Five thousand America troops were deployed to the Guantánamo base, along with airborne and naval forces. In turn, Castro began to mobilise Cuba's forces, and Khrushchev declared the quarantine to be an overtly hostile manoeuvre, threatening that war with the United States was becoming a very real possibility if America didn't leave Cuba alone.

The next day, U.S. planes ascertained that the Soviets were actually performing launch tests on their missiles, leading U.S. ships to take up position off Cuba's coastline, barring any ships from getting any nearer to the island. By 25 October, Kennedy had written to Khrushchev promising full-scale conflict if the Soviets didn't remove their missiles from Cuban soil. Khrushchev's eventual response on 26 October was to suggest a compromise: the USSR would withdraw its nuclear arsenal in exchange for a legal assurance from the U.S. that it would never invade Cuba again.

"THE DECISION TO BLOCKADE THE ISLAND WAS, FOR LEGAL REASONS, SOLD AS A 'QUARANTINE' OF CUBA"

Kennedy was willing to use this as the basis for some serious negotiations, but Castro, caught in the middle of the standoff, remained unconvinced and distrustful of Kennedy. He wrote to Khrushchev outlining his belief that the U.S. would eventually invade Cuba regardless of what had been agreed and giving carte-blanche to the Soviets to remain in Cuba with their missiles as the island's first best line of defence and deterrence. "I believe the imperialists' aggressiveness is extremely dangerous," wrote Castro in what comprised a part of the correspondence between the three leaders that came to be known as *The Armageddon Letters*.

"If they actually carry out the brutal act of invading Cuba in violation of international law and

22 October
Kennedy informs British PM Harold MacMillan of the ongoing crisis and writes to Khrushchev. In the letter, Kennedy writes, "Not you or any other sane man would […] deliberately plunge the world into war which no country could win." He also makes a U.S. television address.

23 October
The U.S. 'quarantine' ships move into place around Cuba while Soviet submarines lurk nearby. Kennedy asks Khrushchev to halt any Soviet vessels approaching Cuba. Robert Kennedy visits the Soviet embassy to meet with their ambassador.

24 October
Khrushchev responds to Kennedy's letters with hostility, complaining the U.S. is using intimidation. "You are no longer appealing to reason," says the Soviet premier. "You are threatening that if we do not give into your demands you will use force."

25 October
Kennedy writes to Khrushchev urging a Soviet withdrawal from Cuba and rejects UN Secretary General U Thant's proposal of a 'cooling-off period' as Soviet missiles would remain in Cuba. Heated debates between the U.S. and the USSR take place at the UN.

26 October
Castro writes to Khrushchev urging him not to back down, even if it means making a stand with catastrophic force. But Khrushchev contacts Kennedy to suggest a solution: the U.S.'s removal of its own nuclear weapons from Turkey and Italy in exchange for the USSR's withdrawal from Cuba.

27 October
A U.S. U-2 plane is shot down over Cuban airspace by Soviet missiles and the pilot is killed. Meanwhile, a Soviet submarine with a nuclear warhead aboard is attacked. Robert Kennedy secretly meets with the Soviet ambassador and cautious terms are agreed.

28 October
Radio Moscow announces the USSR has agreed to leave Cuba on the understanding that the U.S. can never again attempt an invasion, and that U.S. WMDs will be removed from sites near Russia. Castro is furious to learn the news from public radio.

morality, that would be the moment to eliminate such danger forever through an act of clear legitimate defence, however harsh and terrible the solution would be."

On 27 October, the confrontation escalated alarmingly when U.S. Air Force Major Rudolf Anderson was shot down and killed in his F-102 fighter when he strayed into Cuban airspace. Further U.S. reconnaissance aircraft attempting to ascertain the lie of the land were also fired upon from the ground, while at practically the same time dangerous events were occurring beneath the waters of the Caribbean. The U.S. naval destroyer U.S.S. *Beale* had tracked down the Soviet submarine B-59 and begun dropping depth charges on it, scoring several hits. However, the Beale's crew didn't know the B-59 was carrying a 15-kiloton nuclear torpedo. Running out of air and surrounded by ships that wouldn't allow it to surface, the B-59's officers came horrendously close to desperately launching their payload before Captain Vasili Arkhipov managed to persuade his comrades to stand down and surrender.

As all this was occurring, Kennedy received another letter from Khrushchev offering to withdraw his weapons from Cuba if America would do the same in Turkey. The attacks on the U.S. planes had not been officially sanctioned by the Soviets but had been carried out on the orders of commanders acting independently. The USSR seemed dangerously close to losing control of its own forces, and if that happened catastrophic consequences might have been on the cards.

Kennedy replied to Khrushchev accepting his terms: pledging the U.S. would never again invade Cuba if the Soviet warheads were removed and, in a private addendum, agreeing to remove the Americans' own missiles threatening the USSR from Turkey. Khrushchev revealed later that Kennedy also offered to remove the U.S.'s nuclear arsenal from Italy: a symbolic gesture only since the Italian weapons were obsolete.

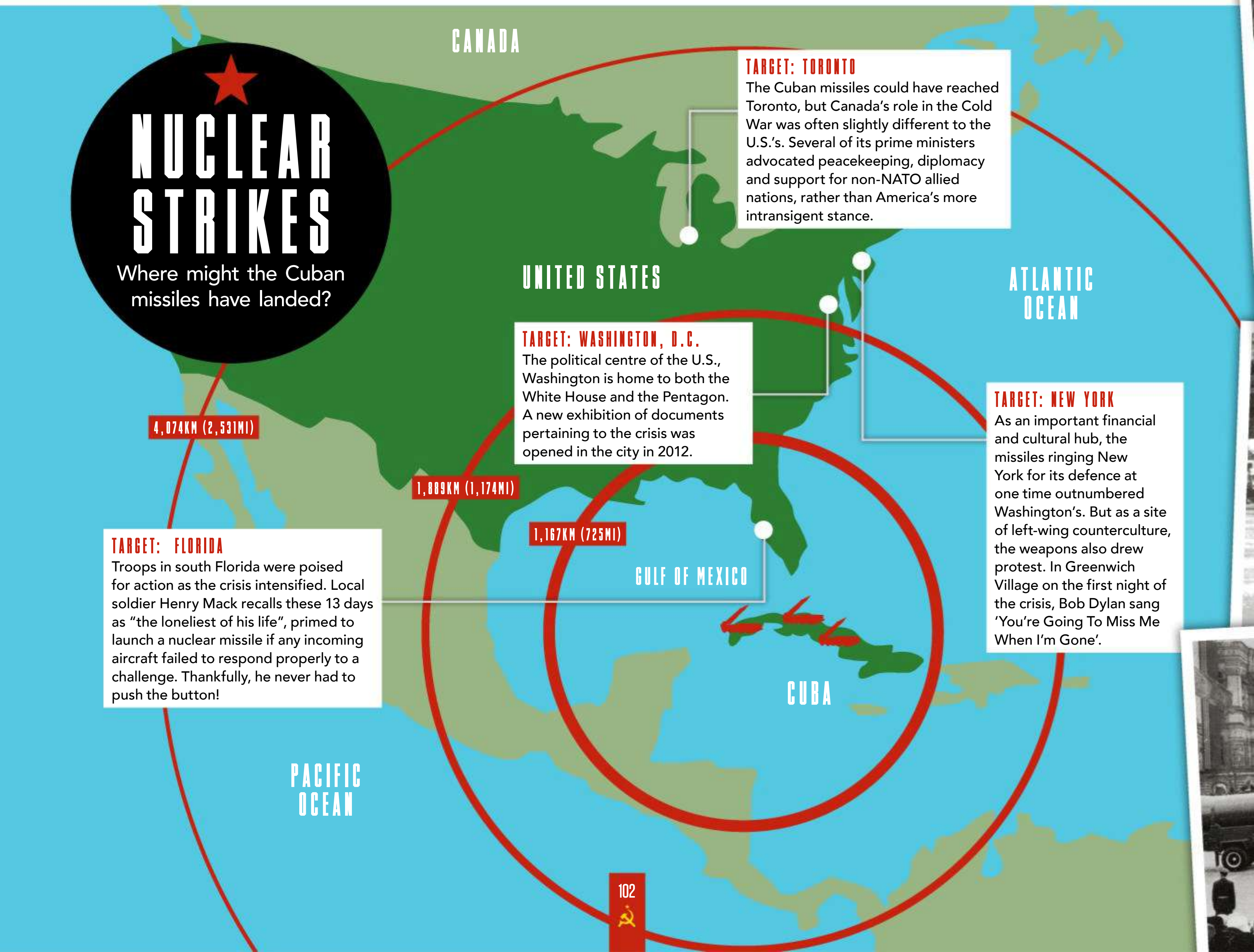
At 9 a.m. on 28 October, a message from Khrushchev was broadcast on Radio Moscow stating that work at the Soviet weapon sites in Cuba would cease immediately and that the arsenal would be dismantled and returned to the USSR. A relieved Kennedy responded immediately, promising to honour the agreement and calling Khrushchev's decision "an important and constructive contribution to peace." Castro, who had not been consulted by either side, was furious to learn the news from the radio.

The U.S. 'quarantine' of Cuba didn't end immediately, with aerial reconnaissance continuing

> "CASTRO, WHO HAD NOT BEEN CONSULTED, WAS FURIOUS TO LEARN THE NEWS OF THE SOVIET WITHDRAWAL FROM THE RADIO"

NUCLEAR STRIKES

Where might the Cuban missiles have landed?



TARGET: TORONTO
The Cuban missiles could have reached Toronto, but Canada's role in the Cold War was often slightly different to the U.S.'s. Several of its prime ministers advocated peacekeeping, diplomacy and support for non-NATO allied nations, rather than America's more intransigent stance.

TARGET: WASHINGTON, D.C.
The political centre of the U.S., Washington is home to both the White House and the Pentagon. A new exhibition of documents pertaining to the crisis was opened in the city in 2012.

TARGET: NEW YORK
As an important financial and cultural hub, the missiles ringing New York for its defence at one time outnumbered Washington's. But as a site of left-wing counterculture, the weapons also drew protest. In Greenwich Village on the first night of the crisis, Bob Dylan sang 'You're Going To Miss Me When I'm Gone'.

TARGET: FLORIDA
Troops in south Florida were poised for action as the crisis intensified. Local soldier Henry Mack recalls these 13 days as "the loneliest of his life", primed to launch a nuclear missile if any incoming aircraft failed to respond properly to a challenge. Thankfully, he never had to push the button!

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

The three leaders state their cases

"In our discussions and exchanges […] the one thing that has most concerned me has been the possibility that your government would not correctly understand the will and determination of the United States in any given situation, since I have not assumed that you or any other sane man would, in this nuclear age, deliberately plunge the world into war which it is crystal clear no country could win and which could only result in catastrophic consequences to the whole world." Kennedy to Khrushchev, 22 Oct 1962

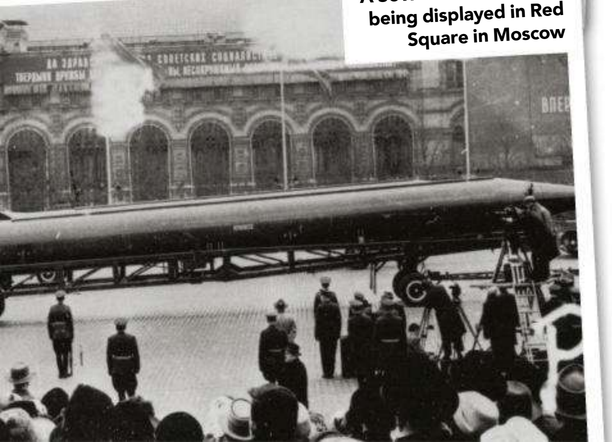
"You, Mr President, are not declaring a quarantine, but rather are setting forth an ultimatum and threatening that if we do not give in to your demands you will use force. Consider what you are saying! And you want to persuade me to agree to this! […] You are no longer appealing to reason, but wish to intimidate us." Khrushchev to JFK, 24 Oct 1962

"The Soviet Union must never allow circumstances in which the imperialists could carry out a nuclear first strike against it. [If] the imperialists carry out an invasion of Cuba – a brutal act in violation of universal and moral law – then that would be the moment to eliminate this danger forever, in an act of the most legitimate self-defence. However harsh and terrible the solution, there would be no other." Castro to Khrushchev, 26 Oct 1962

Kennedy signing the Cuba Quarantine Proclamation

Kennedy meeting with Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko on 18 October 1962

A Soviet nuclear missile being displayed in Red Square in Moscow



to monitor whether the Soviets were packing up as promised. These missions were thankfully uneventful, and the Soviet missiles and their supporting equipment were successfully loaded onto eight ships, leaving Cuban waters between 5 and 9 November. The blockade officially ended on 20 November. The U.S. removed its nuclear missiles from Turkey the following April. Castro may have been angry, and Soviet-Cuban relations significantly cooled, but the fact was that his position had been thoroughly strengthened by the crisis. The U.S. could not now attack Cuba – or Castro personally – without breaking the terms of their own peace treaty and risking Soviet reprisal.

In the aftermath of the crisis, the Moscow-Washington hotline was set up, directly connecting the two political superpowers to facilitate easier negotiation and communication should such a dire situation ever occur again. Major Rudolf Anderson remained the only combatant killed during the standoff (although a further 18 personnel died in crashes and accidents) and his body was returned to the States and buried in South Carolina with full military honours.

While Castro was reasonably secure, neither the U.S. nor the USSR came out of the crisis covered in glory. Khrushchev remained in power in the Soviet Union for two more years, but his eventual ousting was directly attributable to the embarrassment he and his country had suffered in Cuba and the Politburo's perception of him as having managed the situation ineptly. He was seen as having backed away from circumstances he had initiated in the first place, agreeing to humiliating concessions in the process.

Meanwhile, while the U.S. publicly attempted to sell the outcome as a victory, it was also conflicted. U.S. Air Force General Curtis Le May, for example, although his was a minority opinion, called the Cuban Missile Crisis "the greatest defeat in [US] history." Le May had stridently argued for an invasion of Cuba from the earliest moments of the crisis and continued to do so after the Soviets' withdrawal. "We could have gotten not only the missiles out of Cuba, we could have gotten the communists out of Cuba at that time," he was still railing 25 years later.

In the end, it was perhaps humanity itself that won the Cuban Missile Crisis, receiving in the process a desperately urgent wake-up call that the balance of power on our planet was being juggled between two superstates who had the capacity to annihilate one another at a moment's notice and to likely take everyone else with them. Conservative estimates suggest the casualties of a nuclear war between the U.S. and the USSR would have numbered in the hundreds of millions.

Scarily enough, however, the famous Doomsday Clock, which provides a symbolic, visual representation in 'minutes to midnight' of how close the world is at any given time to a politically related global catastrophe, didn't move during the crisis, since it happened faster than the clock's board could react. Immediately before the crisis it stood at seven minutes to midnight, and afterward it moved back to 12: the world deemed a safer place thanks to the treaty. Today, the Doomsday Clock's hands stand at 90 seconds to midnight thanks to the lack of global action to reduce nuclear stockpiles and the war in Ukraine The idea of mutually assured destruction may in modern times feel like it belongs firmly in the past, but some sources suggest it's closer than ever.

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10 IMPORTANT SOVIET INVENTIONS

Plenty of landmark technologies first came to life behind the Iron Curtain

WRITTEN BY PETER FENECH

Throughout human history, scientific advancement and prowess have always been a signature of an aspiring society, from Roman infrastructure to ancient Chinese inventions and, more recently, digital technology. This often takes the form of devices that help to improve drainage, medicine, industry and mechanisation, but, frequently, the most progressive inventions are designed to serve militaristic applications.

Few arms races have been as aggressive and literal as that between the Soviet Union and the West. During the mid-20th century, the political divides gave rise to increased suspicion, heightened defences and, in turn, weaponised diversification. However, the strong motivation on both sides to be the best also had profound sociological roots. The USSR wanted to prove its superiority in the fields of science, technology, literature and art, as did European and American egos. For the Soviet states, this perceived higher form of culture formed the very basis of society and, while admittedly oppressive to some sensibilities, the encouragement to work for the betterment of humanity through socialism produced some remarkable advancements in all of the aforementioned categories.

Due to the closed nature of the USSR, many technologies developed independently from the rest of world, sometimes following similar design principals, in other cases following a different path entirely. This created some fascinating inventions, some of which were playing catchup with their Western counterparts, while others impressively set records and pioneered concepts we still put into practice today. Let's examine some of the most influential creations to come out of the Soviet Union.

ARTIFICIAL HEART

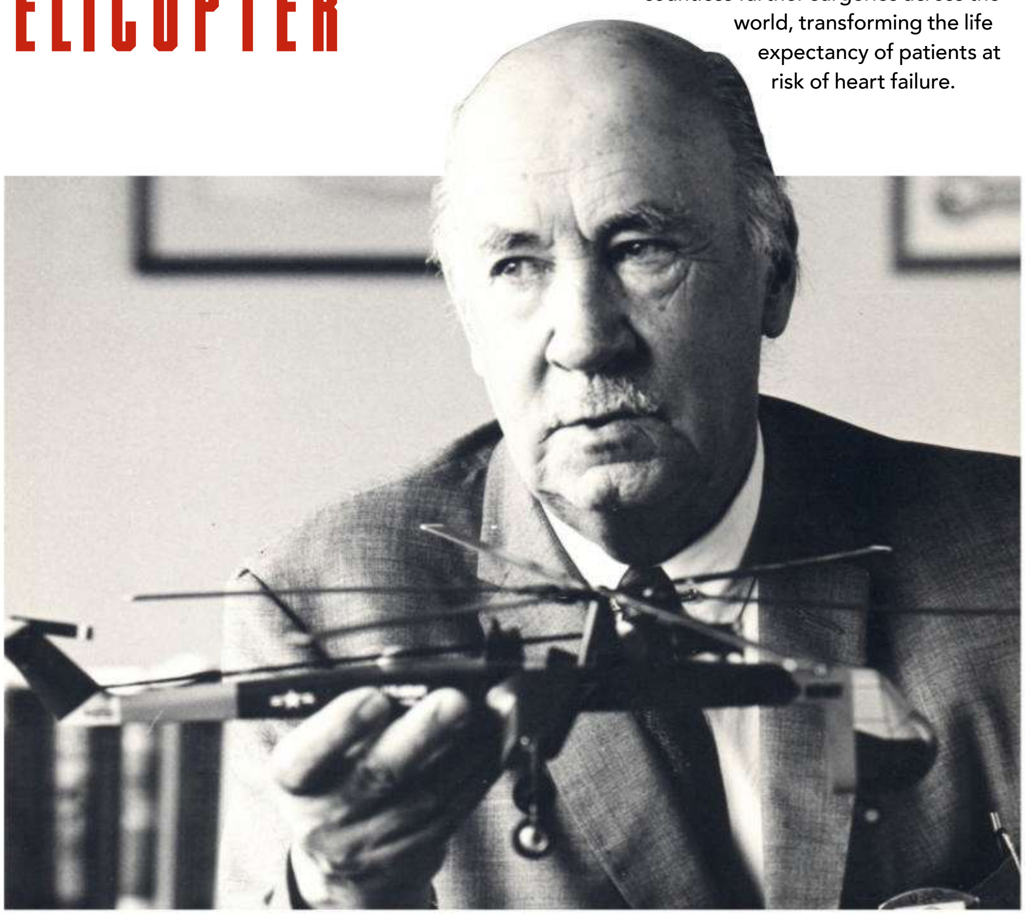
VLADIMIR DEMIKHOV

In the early days of medicine, the idea of organ transplantation might have seemed impossible. Today, it is a commonplace practice, but it's still considered a major procedure that is not without great risk to the patient. One of the fathers of transplant technology is Vladimir Demikhov, a Russian-born student of biology at the University of Moscow. It was here, in 1937, that he constructed an artificial heart. Made from metal, it was the world's first fully transplantable apparatus, roughly the size of a dog's organic heart and consisting of two diaphragm pumps driven by an electric motor. After Demikhov performed the first coronary artery bypass surgery on a dog, the device was able to sustain the recipient canine for five and a half hours. Three decades later, in 1967, South African surgeon Christiaan Barnard, inspired by Demikhov, performed the first human-to-human heart transplant. The patient only lived for a number of days but this process was further refined and allowed later subjects to live for decades. The procedure paved the way for countless further surgeries across the world, transforming the life expectancy of patients at risk of heart failure.

SINGLE-ROTOR HELICOPTER

IGOR SIKORSKY

The Soviet Union had a rich aviation heritage, with many progressive technologies being developed in the quest for militaristic superiority. In addition to the development of commercial jet aircraft, such as the Tu-144 we'll examine later, many successful heavy single-rotor helicopters were also born in the USSR. The very first single-rotor model was actually designed by a Russian-American, Igor Sikorsky. The Stratford, Connecticut-built Vought-Sikorsky VS-300 took off for the first time on 14 September 1939 and is recognised as the world's first helicopter by the modern definition. Sikorsky was born in Kiev and later attended the Imperial Russian Naval Academy. Inspired by the Wright brothers' successful flight, he became a fixed-wing aircraft designer. In 1919, he moved to the U.S, where he patented a "direct lift aircraft", which became the VS-300. Fast forward to 1977 and the Mil Mi-26 took flight, becoming the first helicopter to use a single, eight-blade main lift rotor. Produced by the JSC Rostvertol group, it is the largest serially produced helicopter ever. Such designs have revolutionised heavy air transport, troop deployment and rescue missions and enabled flying in terrain impossible for fixed-wing aircraft to safely navigate.



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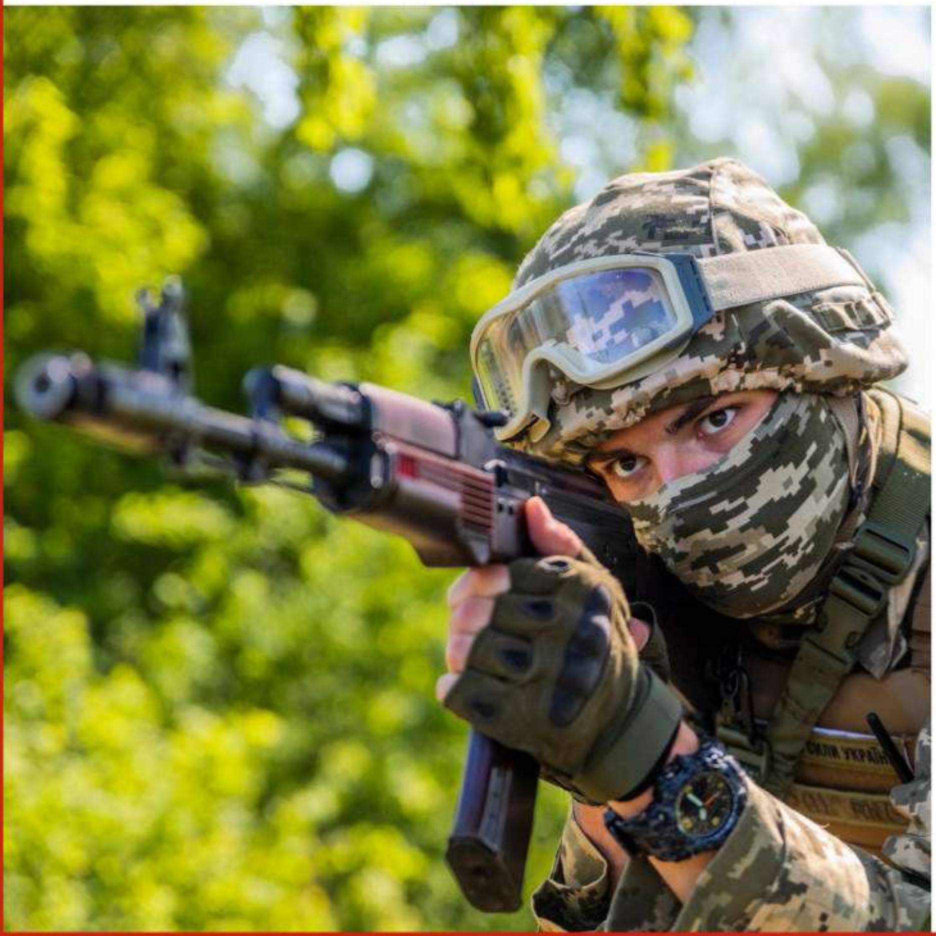
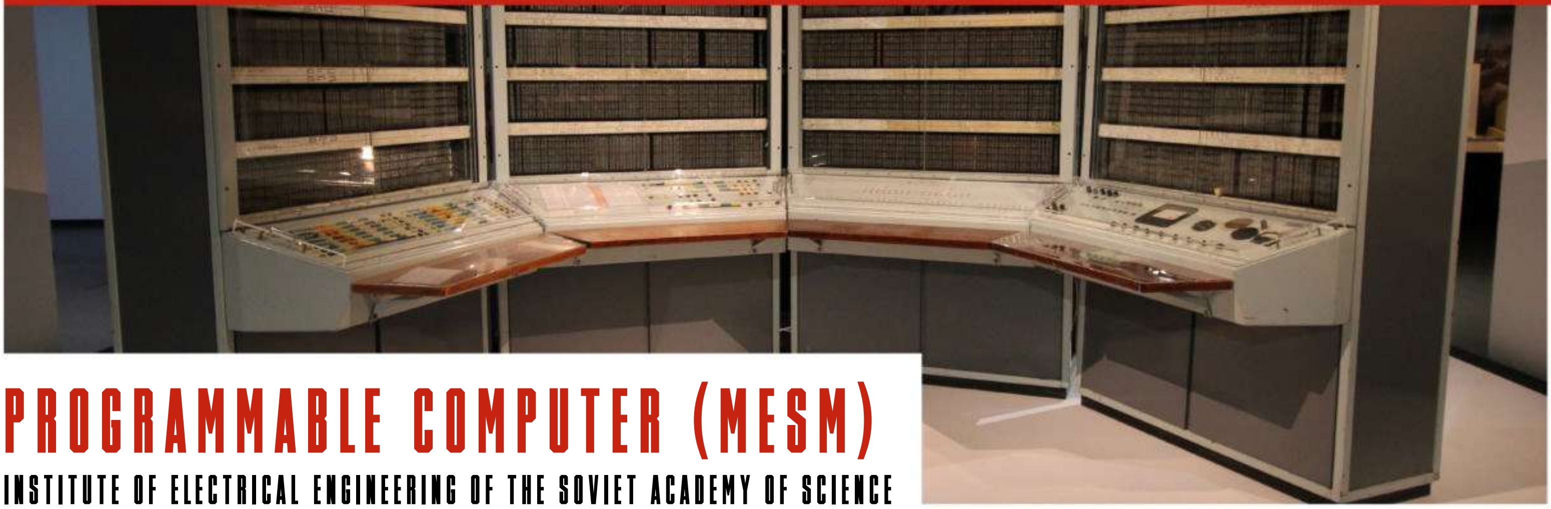


AK-47

MIKHAIL KALASHNIKOV

Automatic and semiautomatic weaponry are the cornerstone of modern warfare due to their lethal effectiveness, practicality and ease of use. The terms AK-47 and Kalashnikov are instantly recognisable, even to those uninformed on weapon design, and the AK-47 itself (which stands for Avtomat Kalashnikova model 1947) has become the most recognisable Soviet firearm. Designed by Mikhail Kalashnikov in that year, it was adopted by the Soviet military in 1949 due to its cost-effectiveness. It was a rugged design and could be mass-produced with ease – ideal properties for a standard-issue assault rifle. With a muzzle velocity (the relative speed of the bullet as it leaves the gun barrel) of 715m/s and a firing rate of 600 7.62mm rounds per minute, the model is still favoured by guerrilla fighters the world over, especially in nations with historic links to Soviet Russia. Indeed, the rifle has been so popular it even appears on some national flags, such as that of Mozambique. There were some flaws in the general design, notably an aggressive recoil that impacted accuracy. These were iteratively improved upon in subsequent editions, and the latest variants – the AK-74M, AK-12 and AK-15 – have seen the Russian Army into the 21st century.



PROGRAMMABLE COMPUTER (MESM)

INSTITUTE OF ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING OF THE SOVIET ACADEMY OF SCIENCE

The inventor of the first programmable computer is much debated. There are several different contenders for the title, but the timeline of construction of each of the early computers is poorly defined. However, the machines responsible for the subsequent direction of Soviet computer technology are undisputedly the M-1 and MESM. It seems likely that their creation followed earlier efforts by Western research teams, and there are conflicting suggestions that their lead investigators, Isaak Brook and Bashir Rameev (M-1) and Sergei Lebedev (MESM) learned of the results from radio broadcasts and magazines entering the USSR. Regardless, both of these devices were among the very first recognised digital computers. The MESM was devised as a prototype for a large 'Electronic Calculating Machine' and was purely intended as a model (M in the name) on which different strategies for creating universal digital computers could be tested. However, such was its success that it was fully developed, coming online in 1950. Later, Kateryna Yushchenko developed the Address programming language, making MESM even more powerful and run on Soviet computers into the 1970s. While not the first computer in continental Europe, the MESM was a technical marvel that ensured the USSR rapidly caught up with the West, accelerating global digital advancement.

CONTACTLESS CARD TECHNOLOGY

LEON THEREMIN

Have you ever wondered how your credit card works? The technology actually has its origins in Cold War Russia. On 4 August 1945, the USSR presented U.S. ambassador Averell Harriman with a wooden crest as a gift. While it was checked for bugs, none were found. However, concealed within the artefact (known as 'The Thing') was a resonant cavity microphone. It was activated by radio waves, directed at the device from a remote location, which provided power. A metal membrane converted the sound waves and the device transmitted the audio to a waiting receiver. It went undetected for seven years until conversations in the ambassador's residence were overheard by the U.S. military. The device was designed by Leon Theremin, inventor of the electrical instrument which took his name, and a similar RFID system is used in modern card readers. The reader emits an electromagnetic signal that provides a small charge. The card then transmits your bank details wirelessly. Theremin's design paved the way for much of the NFC technology we use everyday.

NUCLEAR POWER PLANT

N/A

The size of the USSR was a large influencing factor in the uptake of nuclear power. The cost and practicality of transporting conventional fuels from the east, where most reserves were located, to the densely populated west were generally inefficient. Nuclear research in Russia has a long history, but the 1917 Revolution provided a huge boost to investment and progress. Due to increased political tensions with Europe and the U.S., military applications were the early motivations for research and development, but during these times the huge release of heat was recognised as a potential source of electricity generation. In May 1946, the Institute of Physics and Power Engineering (FEI) was created to develop the technology and existing channel-type reactors were modified for efficient energy conversion. The most famous Soviet reactor was the RBMK, which used solid graphite as a moderating material to increase energy output. While cost-effective, the tendency for this design to become unstable and the difficulty in shutting it down compared to water-moderated types contributed to the Chernobyl disaster in April 1986. Lessons learned from this event provided an impetus for refinement, and Soviet nuclear research continues to influence nuclear power plant design today.

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MOBILE PHONE

LEONID KUPRIYANOVICH

It's hard to imagine a world without mobile phones. The impact they have had on society is hard to quantify, allowing individuals the freedom to contact any other person from almost any location. This was a truly otherworldly concept in the early 20th century, but working examples were produced far earlier than many people today realise. In 1957, in Soviet Russia, radio engineer Leonid Kupriyanovich revealed his invention, the LK-1, a wholly wireless and portable communication device. It weighed three kilograms (6.6 pounds) and was the size of a large book, so it was far from portable by modern standards, but it enabled the user to remotely call another device. Subsequent revisions reduced the size and weight, and by the early 1960s the LK series weighed around 70 grams (2.5 ounces) and fit into the holder's palm. The device was a revelation across the USSR, the product and Kupriyanovich himself becoming instant household names. The mobile phone, called a radiophone at this stage, was due to enter commercial production, but there was a flaw: each device required its own radio frequency and there simply weren't sufficient airwaves. This limited the number of potential subscribers to the service, so it wasn't financially viable.

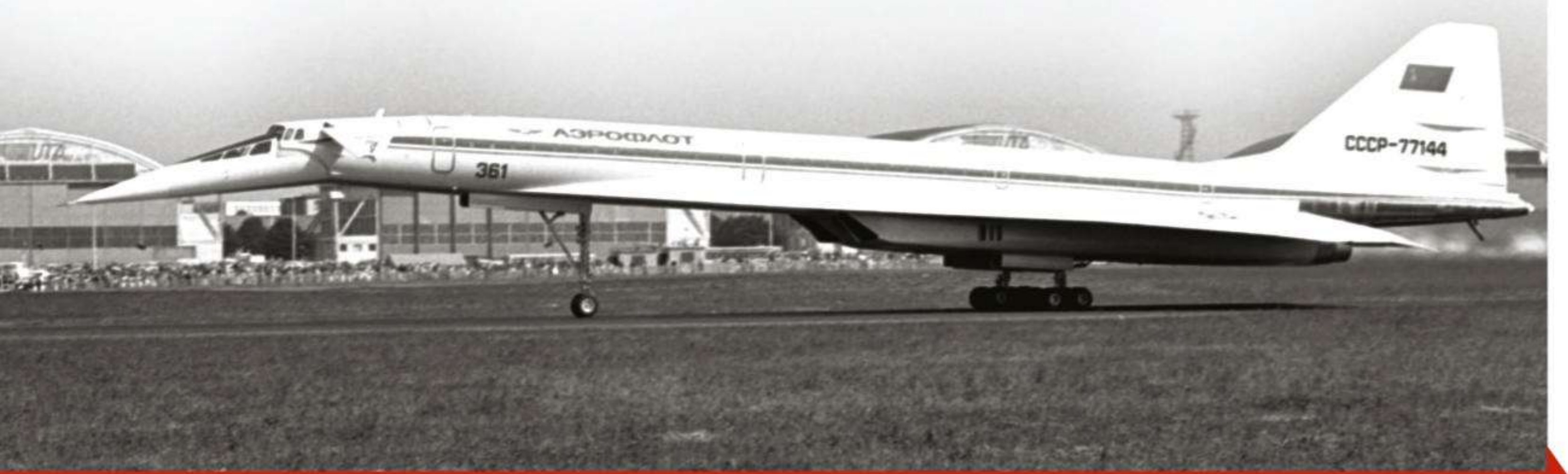
NUCLEAR TORPEDO

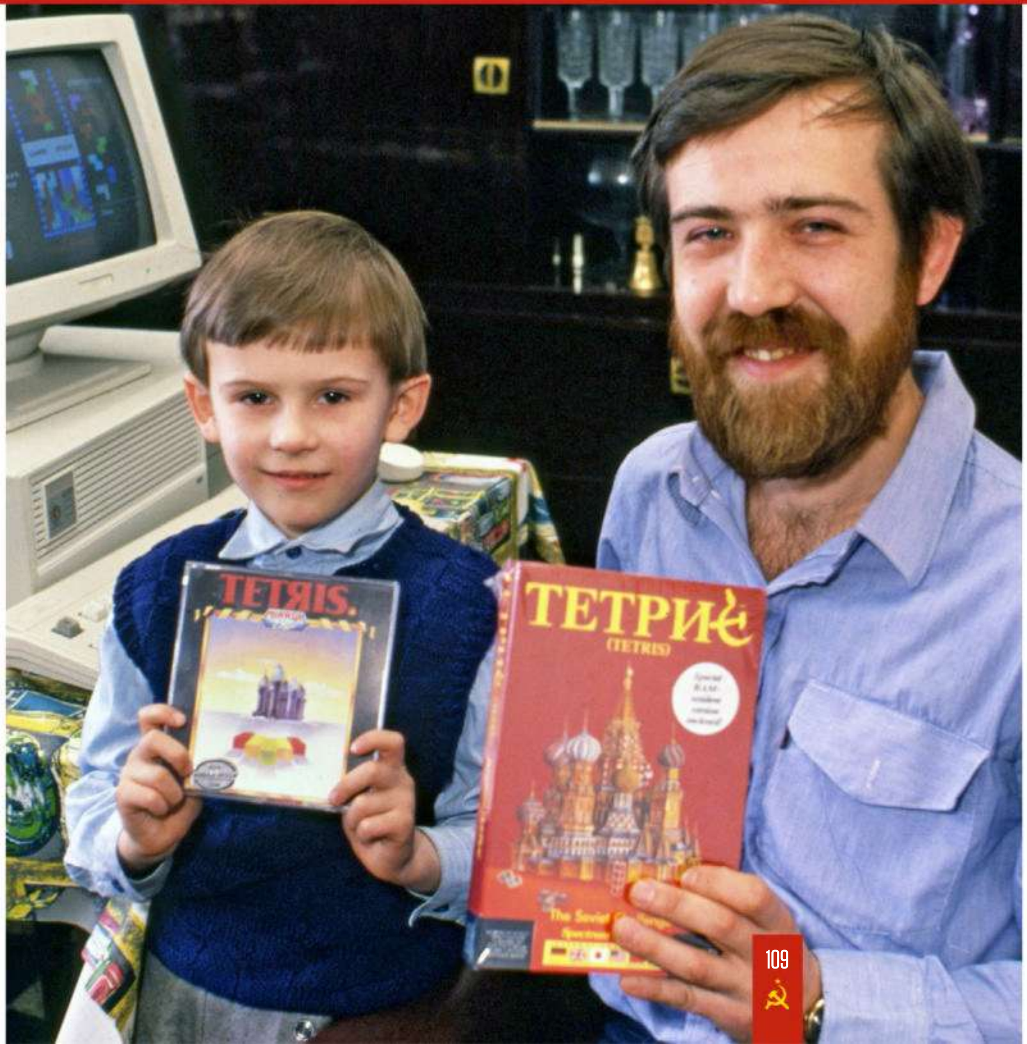
N/A

Starting with cannon fire, launching projectiles has long been an efficient method of naval combat. The USSR was the source of much research and development of torpedo technology, culminating, rather unsurprisingly, in nuclear weaponry in the early 20th century. The interest in nuclear weapons surged in the 1940s, and by the 1950s the T-15 project was born, developing a large torpedo for creating underwater explosions to generate tsunami waves. These would damage coastal bases and towns, further impacting recovery with the spread of radioactive water. Development was extremely secretive. Limitations of the T-15 were its physical size, which restricted deployment to one torpedo per submarine, and the fact that the vessel would have to get very close to the target to be effective. The development of the T-15 and its sibling, the T-5 (which was allegedly almost deployed during the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962) accelerated the nuclear arms race with the U.S. The possible impacts globally are profound and the technology has been continuously enhanced, culminating in the Status-6, an until-recently secret new Russian nuclear torpedo.

TUPOLEV TU-144 TUPOLEV

It seems an odd step backwards that we no longer enjoy supersonic commercial air travel. The Anglo-French Concorde is the most famous iteration of this technology, but few know the story of the Tupolev Tu-144, a supersonic airliner that beat the European plane to the skies. The U.S. Congress cancelled its funding for Boeing to develop an American contender, so the race was between Concorde and the Tu-144, affectionately called 'Concordski' for its remarkably similar delta-wing design. The Tupolev enjoyed its maiden flight two months before Concorde and achieved supersonic flight first, cementing its place in the history books. There were theories that the similarities were down to industrial espionage, but it is widely accepted that the styling of the fuselage and wings is a product of functional requirement. The Tu-144 was the pride of the Soviet Union and made an impression with its main competitors, who had to work hard to outshine its technology and physical beauty. Unfortunately, this competitive nature spelled disaster for the Tu-144 programme. An overly audacious flying display at the Paris Air Show in 1973 caused structural failure of the aircraft, which crashed in the village of Goussainville, sadly killing all six crew members and eight people on the ground.

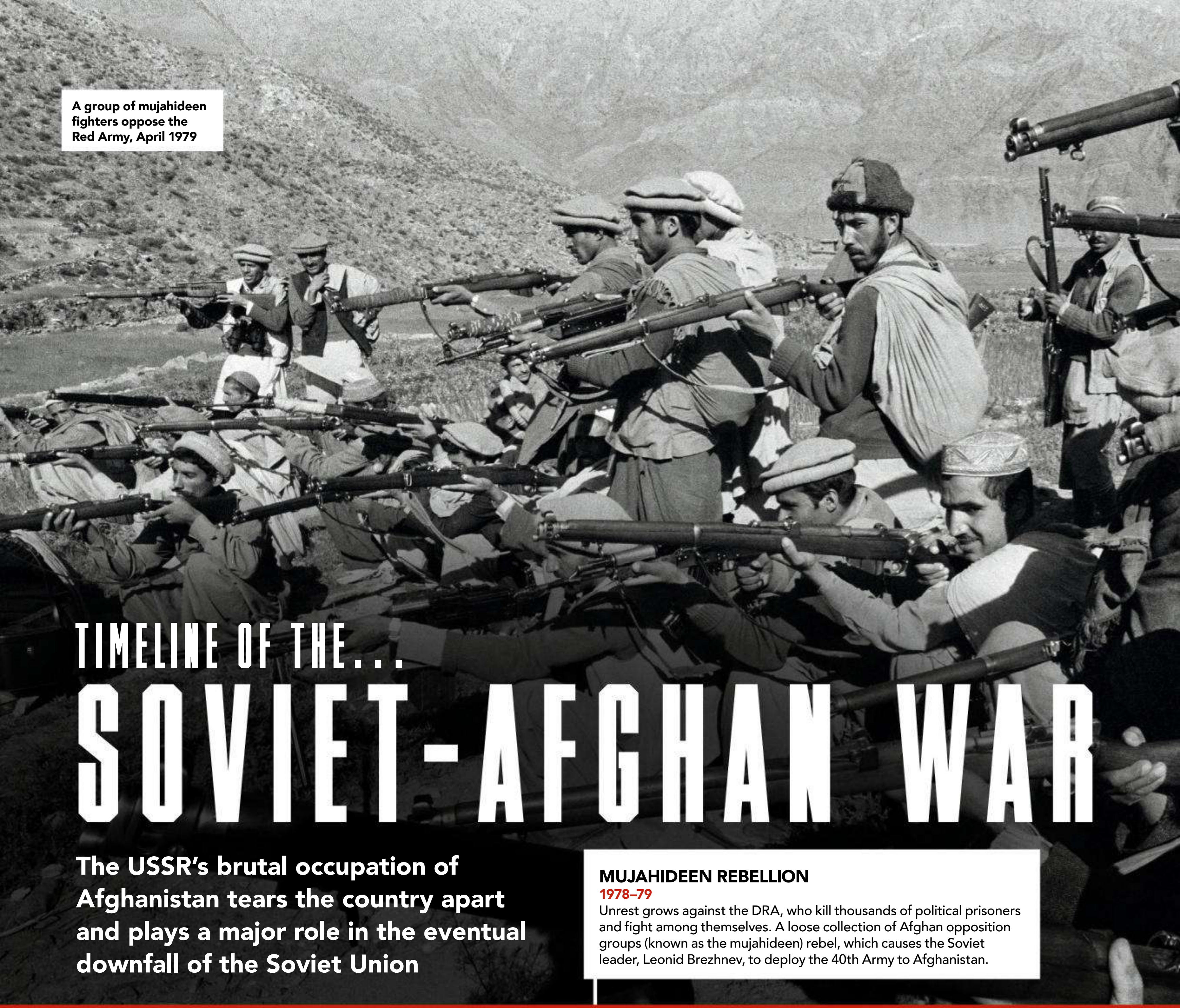




TETRIS ALEXEY PAJITNOV

What started as a basic program to test hardware has gone down in history as one of the most popular and influential computer games in the world and elevated its creator to a revered status. Alexey Pajitnov was working as a computer engineer at a Soviet state-owned research institute called the Dorodnitsyn Computing Centre. Unusually, Pajitnov and his colleagues were permitted to communicate with foreign development agencies, which allowed them to access hardware from outside of the Soviet Union. This proved a powerful impetus for the creation of *Tetris*. Based on his love of the game pentominoes, Pajitnov built the first version on an Electronika 60 model computer. The game technically belonged to the Soviet state, so he received little or no direct royalties for the game. In 1991, Pajitnov left Russia for America and founded the Tetris Company with Henk Rogers, a game designer from the Netherlands. Together, they marketed the game, which has since become one of the most reproduced and licensed in history, available in multiple formats for a huge variety of devices. It has been shown to have positive cognitive effects on players and is viewed as a significant step in education 'gamification' trends.

© Alamy, Getty Images


A group of mujahideen fighters oppose the Red Army, April 1979

TIMELINE OF THE... SOVIET-AFGHAN WAR

The USSR's brutal occupation of Afghanistan tears the country apart and plays a major role in the eventual downfall of the Soviet Union

MUJAHIDEEN REBELLION

1978–79

Unrest grows against the DRA, who kill thousands of political prisoners and fight among themselves. A loose collection of Afghan opposition groups (known as the mujahideen) rebel, which causes the Soviet leader, Leonid Brezhnev, to deploy the 40th Army to Afghanistan.

SAUR REVOLUTION

27–28 April 1978

The Soviet-backed People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) launches a coup d'etat against the First Republic of Afghanistan. Afghan President Mohammad Daoud Khan and his family are killed and the socialist Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA) is established.

© Alamy

DRA Afghan soldiers ride a Soviet-produced T-62 tank during a military parade to mark the tenth anniversary of the Saur Revolution, April 1988

OPERATION STORM-333

27 December 1979

Soviet special forces (Spetsnaz) begin the Soviet-Afghan War by storming the Tajbeg Palace in Kabul and assassinating the DRA leader, Hafizullah Amin. A new pro-Soviet DRA government is installed and Kabul is occupied.

SOVIET OCCUPATION

December 1979 – February 1980

The Soviet Union occupies Afghanistan by entering the country along two ground routes and an air corridor. The invasion exacerbates Afghan nationalist sentiment, while the Red Army finds itself quashing uprisings at the request of the new DRA government.

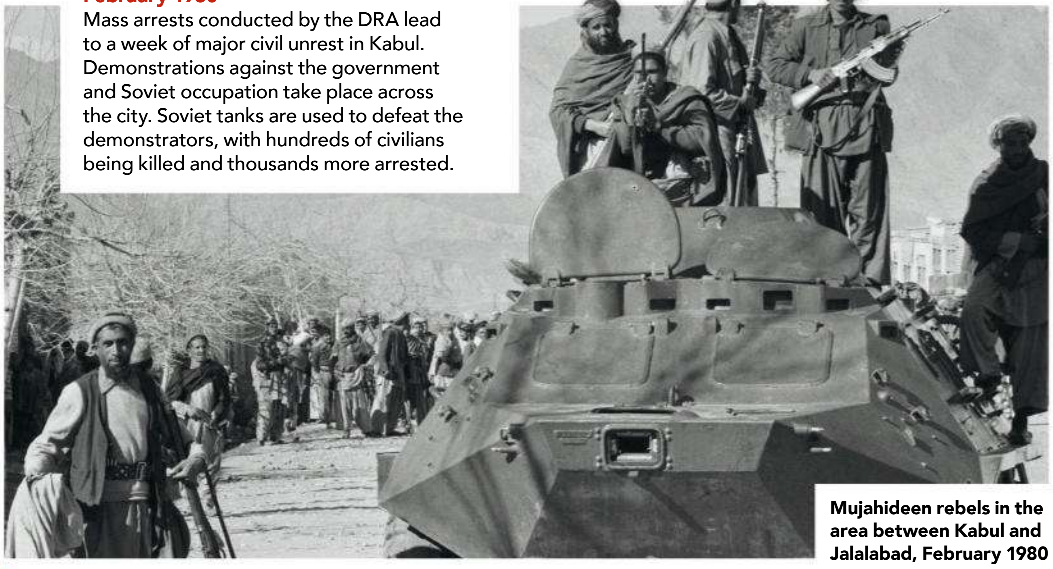
© Getty

Soviet soldiers pictured in Kabul, c.1980

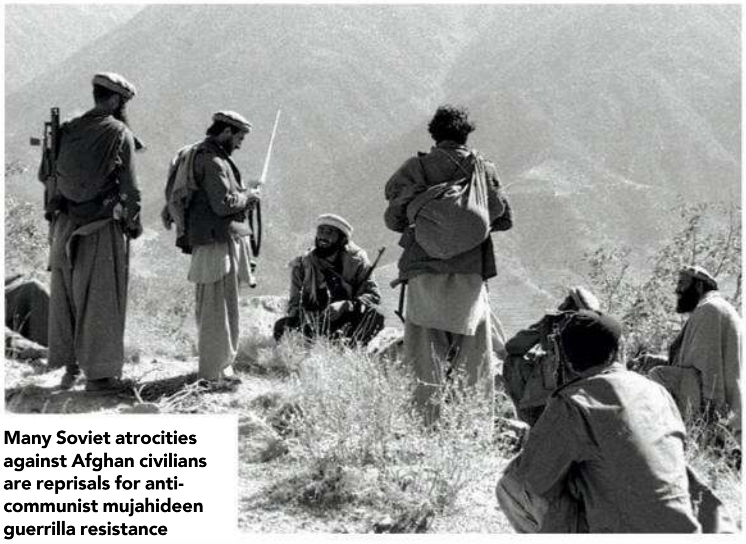
3 HOOT UPRISING

February 1980

Mass arrests conducted by the DRA lead to a week of major civil unrest in Kabul. Demonstrations against the government and Soviet occupation take place across the city. Soviet tanks are used to defeat the demonstrators, with hundreds of civilians being killed and thousands more arrested.



Mujahideen rebels in the area between Kabul and Jalalabad, February 1980



Many Soviet atrocities against Afghan civilians are reprisals for anti-communist mujahideen guerrilla resistance

WAR CRIMES

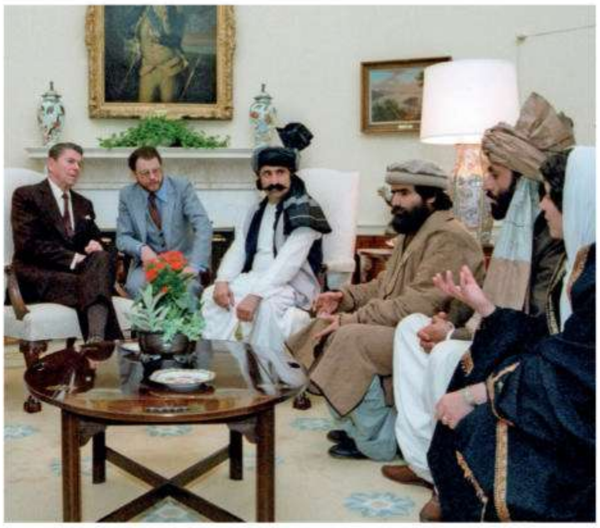
1980–89

Some historians believe that the Soviet Union is guilty of committing genocide in Afghanistan. Perhaps as many as 2 million Afghans are killed by the Soviets or the DAR, with violence and rape being commonplace. Massacres of hundreds of civilians also occur, including at Padkhwab-e Shana and in Laghman Province.

OPERATION CYCLONE

1979–89

The CIA leads a programme to arm and finance the mujahideen against Soviet forces and the DRA. Funding and supplies largely go to militant Islamic groups that are favoured by neighbouring Pakistan. Cyclone becomes the longest and most expensive CIA covert operation in its history.



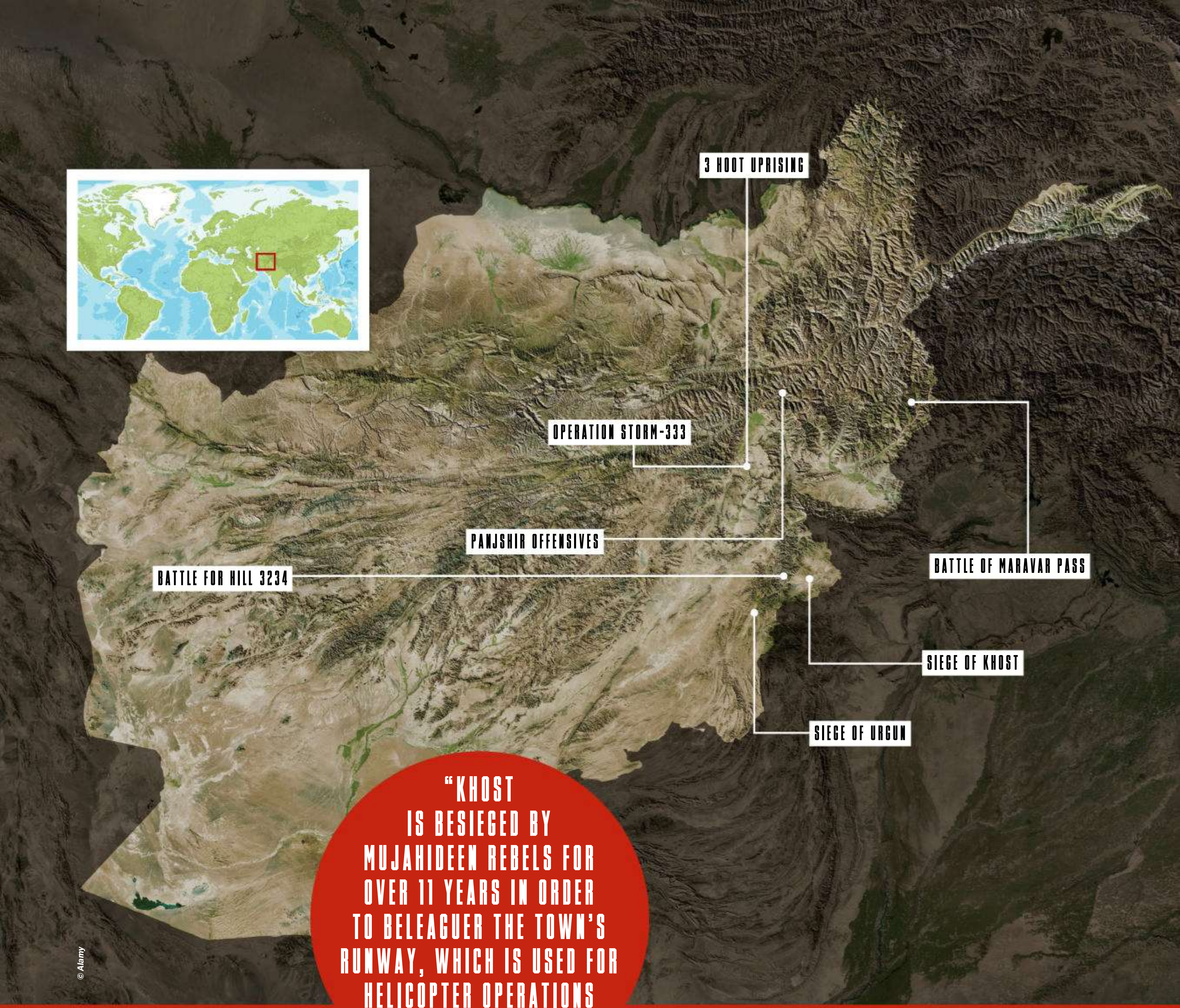
U.S. President Ronald Reagan meets with mujahideen rebel leaders in the White House, 2 February 1983

PANJSHIR OFFENSIVES

1980–85

The Soviets launch nine campaigns to expel mujahideen rebels from the strategically important Panjshir Valley in central Afghanistan. Tens of thousands of troops are deployed over five years amid intense fighting. Although the Soviets frequently occupy the valley, the mujahideen always retake it.

Abandoned Soviet tanks still litter the Panjshir Valley, a testament to their repeated failed attempts to defeat the mujahideen in this area


3 HOOT UPRISING
OPERATION STORM-333
PANJSHIR OFFENSIVES
BATTLE FOR HILL 3234
BATTLE OF MARAVAR PASS
SIEGE OF KHOST
SIEGE OF URGUN

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> "KHOST IS BESIEGED BY MUJAHIDEEN REBELS FOR OVER 11 YEARS IN ORDER TO BELEAGUER THE TOWN'S RUNWAY, WHICH IS USED FOR HELICOPTER OPERATIONS BY SOVIET FORCES"

SIEGE OF KHOST

1980–91

Khost is besieged by mujahideen rebels for over 11 years in order to beleaguer the town's runway, which is used for helicopter operations by Soviet forces. Road access to Khost is sealed off, which obliges the Soviets to airlift supplies to the garrison. The town is eventually captured by mujahideen forces in 1991.

Civilians in Khost cheer DRA soldiers, 25 May 1986

SIEGE OF URGUN

August 1983 – January 1984

A DRA garrison of 900 soldiers is besieged at Urgun by mujahideen forces. The rebels take the airfield, but a DRA relief column breaks through the mujahideen blockade and relieves the garrison.

Above: A DRA convoy drives through a tunnel in snowy conditions

BATTLE OF MARAVAR PASS

21–22 April 1985

Soviet Spetsnaz troops are ambushed by mujahideen rebels in a gorge. Heavy casualties are inflicted on a Spetsnaz company before relieving Russian airborne forces arrive. The rebels proceed to conduct a successful fighting withdrawal.

A Soviet convoy is destroyed in a mujahideen ambush

BATTLE FOR HILL 3234

7–8 January 1988

Thirty-nine Soviet paratroopers fight a successful defensive battle against hundreds of mujahideen rebels and Pakistani mercenaries as part of Operation Magistral. Fighting near an important strategic road, the Soviets suffer just two fatalities while inflicting heavy losses on the mujahideen during 12 separate attacks.

Re-enactors dressed as Soviet paratroopers

© Alamy

A column of Soviet armoured vehicles

OPERATION MAGISTRAL

19 November 1987 – 10 January 1988

The Soviet 40th Army and DRA forces manage to relieve Khost when they enter the town on 30 December 1987. However, their armoured forces withdraw on 30 January. This allows the mujahideen to cut off Khost once more.

SOVIET WITHDRAWAL

15 May 1988 – 15 February 1989

The Soviets conduct a carefully planned withdrawal from Afghanistan in two phases. They continue to supply the DRA but the regime falls in 1992 and the country descends into civil war. The Soviet-Afghan conflict is also a major contributing factor in the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991.

Soviet armoured personnel vehicles cross a bridge on the Soviet-Afghan border during the withdrawal of the Red Army, 21 May 1988

© Getty

THE FIGHT FOR AFGHANISTAN

From a dictator and a spymaster to a future terrorist, these men played a central role in the Soviet-Afghan War's vicious realpolitik

GENERAL MOHAMMAD ZIA-UL-HAQ

Pakistan's military dictator supported the mujahideen while secretly advancing a nuclear weapons strategy

1924–88, Pakistan

Having come to power through a coup and imposing martial law, General Zia-ul-Haq's foresight never anticipated the Soviets getting so close to the Pakistani border. This put immense pressure on Islamabad as it did not have the resources to defend its porous border with Afghanistan. General Zia-ul-Haq's response was to adroitly manoeuvre himself as a beneficiary of U.S. aid and the Arab states financing the Afghan resistance.

Over the course of a decade, Pakistan received American money and F-16A/B multirole fighters as compensation for making the country's tribal frontier a safe haven where the mujahideen could muster and re-arm. Whether or not the CIA knew about the general's plans to import equipment for assembling nuclear weapons remains uncertain. It's possible Director William Casey's own judgment of the situation at the time, when the Reagan White House was supporting guerrillas in several countries, led to this glaring oversight. General Zia-ul-Haq's tolerance for Islamists was just as problematic, as it drew radicalised young men to congregate in the cities where the mujahideen gathered.

Pakistan's conniving head of state was robbed of his place in the history books on 17 August 1988 when his official plane, a C-130 Hercules, crashed in the desert.

DIRECTOR WILLIAM CASEY

The head of the CIA concocted an elaborate scheme to embroil the Soviets in Afghanistan **1913–87, U.S.**

Having learned the deadly trade of a covert operative during WWII when he served in the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), secrecy and subterfuge remained permanent fixtures in Casey's life. Given his role as CIA Director as a reward for his support of the Republican Party, it was the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan that galvanized his most ambitious project. By 1982 the CIA had enlisted at least six partners, from petrol-rich Saudi Arabia to communist China, in an elaborate geopolitical gamble: the CIA would funnel arms and money to the disorganised Afghan rebels while Pakistan would grant the mujahideen and their jihadi allies sanctuary in cities like Peshawar, enabling them to conduct their war.

Helping Casey along were other enthusiastic Americans such as congressman Charlie Wilson, who used his influence to approve monetary support for the Afghan rebels. But these same covert operations became Casey's undoing.

A scandal over illicit money transfers being funnelled to right-wing Nicaraguan rebels, as well as other financial misdemeanours, tarnished Casey's name. He succumbed to a heart attack in 1987 at the age of 74.

ABDUL RASHID DOSTUM

Ruthless and loyal to his people, Dostum has survived four decades of war

1954–present, Afghanistan

The true state of Afghanistan after the USSR's departure is not widely understood in the West. Despite the invaders finally withdrawing, the fighting was not over. The mujahideen factions carried on the struggle, and this time the goal was toppling the communist regime in Kabul. But a serious roadblock to the effort was the imposing presence of the self-styled General Dostum, an Uzbek militia leader from the northwest whose uncompromising style of governing combined local autonomy with rough justice.

Despite repeated allegations of atrocities by his personal army, Dostum's own worst tendencies paled in comparison to the jihadis and their enablers, who prolonged the civil war until the Taliban took power in 1994. Never betraying his own people, Dostum held out in his enclave until Operation Enduring Freedom, when he joined American special forces in rolling back the Taliban. Dostum further embellished his warlord status by encouraging his men to fight on horseback even when under fire.

Dostum's ugly past – involving massacres and assorted crimes – may never sit well, but his experience and longevity leaves him a force to be reckoned with in national politics.

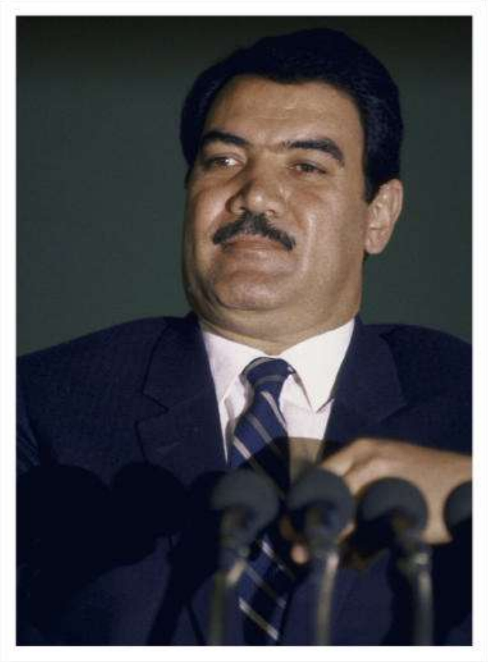
PRESIDENT MOHAMMAD NAJIBULLAH

Few heads of state fell from power as wretchedly as this politician

1947–96, Afghanistan

Installed by the Soviets in 1986 after the dismal leadership of President Babrak Karmal, President Najibullah struggled to compromise with the mujahideen, who by that time were openly allied with the United States. A doctor by profession, Najibullah's steady rise within the Afghan Communist Party – also known as the PDPA – and his own credentials as a devoted socialist made him a convenient choice as a proxy who could be kept in power by Soviet military might. But within a handful of years Najibullah and his crumbling government were left to fend for themselves.

By 1992, the mujahideen had encircled Kabul, and there was no longer an Afghan armed forces, much less a functioning government, worthy of the name. Neither did the fledgling Russian Federation, aimless and bankrupt, attempt to intervene on behalf of its former ally. Separated from his family and run out of office, Najibullah found safety by hiding in a UN compound.



No other Afghan leader met a worse fate than him. In September 1996, the Taliban hauled him out into the street, castrated him, tied him to a jeep and dragged him through Kabul. He was then shot in the head and strung up.

AHMAD SHAH MASSOUD

Perhaps the only mujahideen commander revered as a national hero and patriot

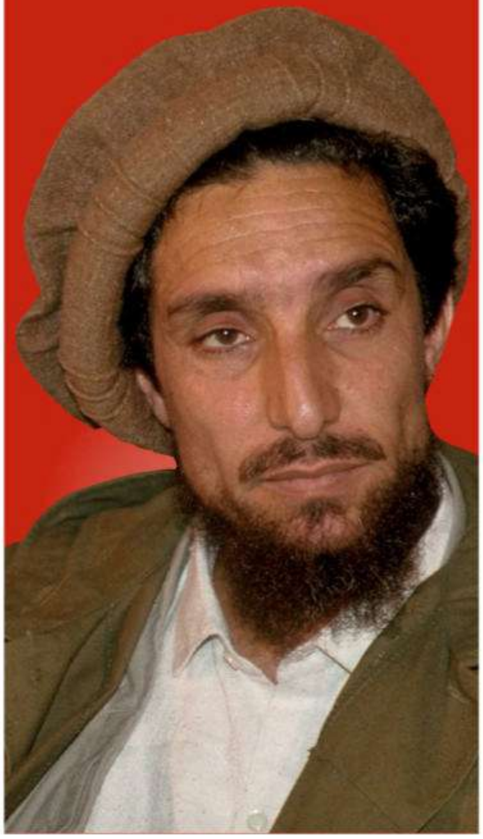
1953–2001, Afghanistan

The ethnic Tajik who held the Panjshir Valley against repeated Soviet incursions is still remembered with reverence by many Afghans, be they comrades-in-arms or former enemies.

Having defected to join the rebels once the Soviets installed a puppet government in Kabul, Massoud and his cohort endured many bitter years waging guerrilla war against the occupiers. It was only later in the conflict that their greater numbers and improved equipment allowed them to inflict huge losses against the increasingly weary Soviets.

Massoud's big mistake, however, was his utter failure to build a peaceful alliance with other mujahideen commanders, many of whom were actively plundering the country or were in league with jihadis who wanted to impose a theocracy (a system of government ruled by religious figures). The years of devastation suffered by Afghanistan are a testament to this wasted opportunity.

On 9 September 2001, a team of journalists who were earlier vetted by Massoud's security detail turned out to be assassins trained by Al-Qaeda. The 'Lion of the Panjshir' was killed by improvised explosives triggered at close range. Undeterred by the loss of their figurehead, the Tajiks of northwest Afghanistan still allied with the United States to topple the Taliban.



OSAMA BIN LADEN

The Saudi radical found his true calling in Afghanistan during the 1980s

1957–2011, Saudi Arabia/Afghanistan/Pakistan

Growing up in an affluent family whose riches came from the patronage of the Saudi royals, the notorious terror leader was drawn to the Afghan jihad for reasons that are still unexplained. Like many Saudi idealists who joined the resistance, bin Laden's own participation was limited at best. The evidence of his soldiering with the mujahideen is scarce and what little survives is unremarkable. But the connections he made in Pakistan, such as meeting his longtime collaborator Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri, served him well later on.

The Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan and the subsequent in-fighting among the mujahideen forced bin Laden to search for another cause. At first it was the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait, but the Gulf monarchies shunned bin Laden's offers to mobilise volunteers eager to liberate the country. After failing to establish the Al-Qaeda organisation in Sudan, bin Laden found permanent allies with the Taliban, who overran Kabul in 1996.

The mastermind of 9/11, bin Laden spent the last dozen years of his life a fugitive. On 2 May 2011, he was killed by U.S. Navy SEALs during a raid on a walled compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan.

All images © Getty

CIRCUL
CASA
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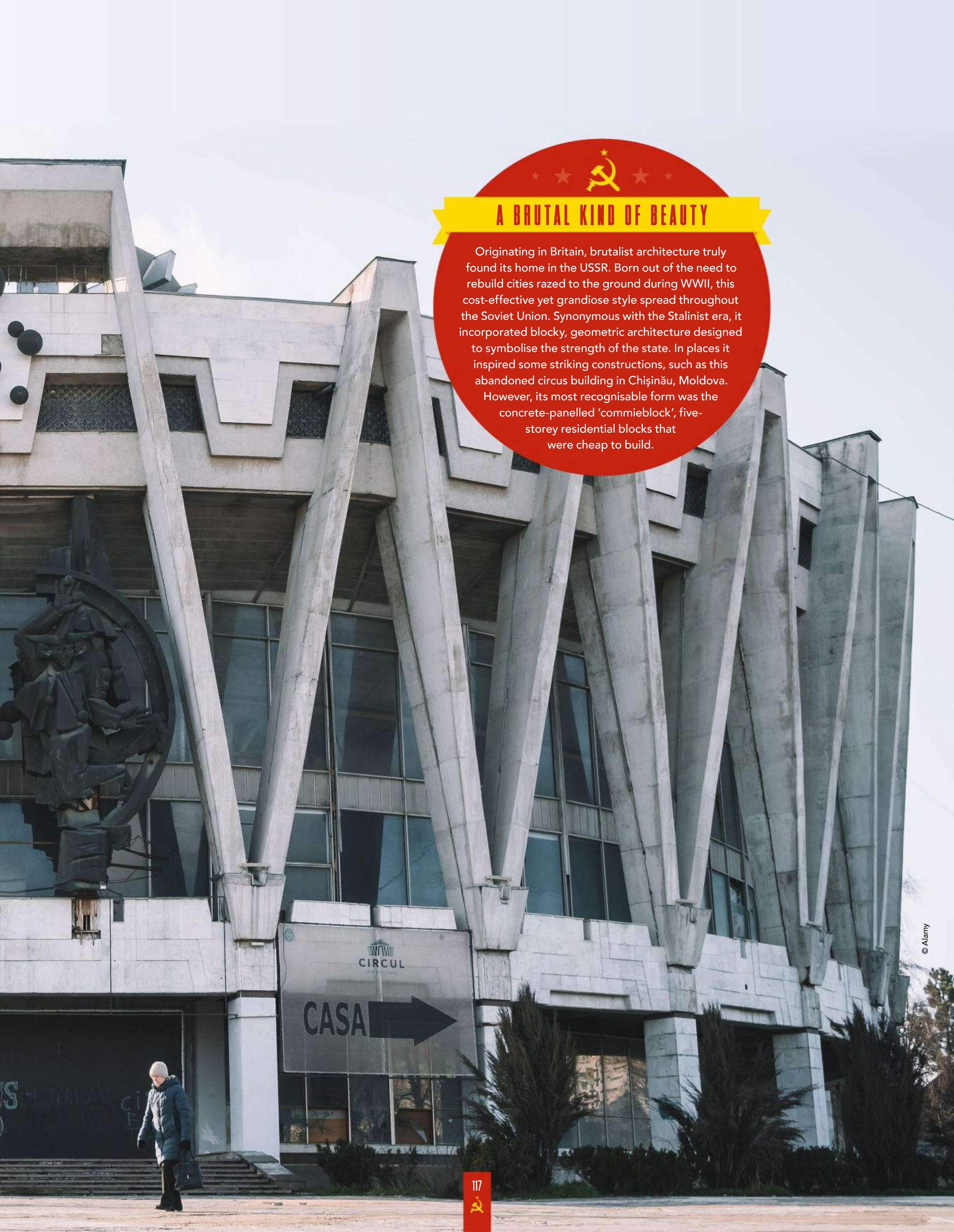

A BRUTAL KIND OF BEAUTY

Originating in Britain, brutalist architecture truly found its home in the USSR. Born out of the need to rebuild cities razed to the ground during WWII, this cost-effective yet grandiose style spread throughout the Soviet Union. Synonymous with the Stalinist era, it incorporated blocky, geometric architecture designed to symbolise the strength of the state. In places it inspired some striking constructions, such as this abandoned circus building in Chișinău, Moldova. However, its most recognisable form was the concrete-panelled 'commieblock', five-storey residential blocks that were cheap to build.

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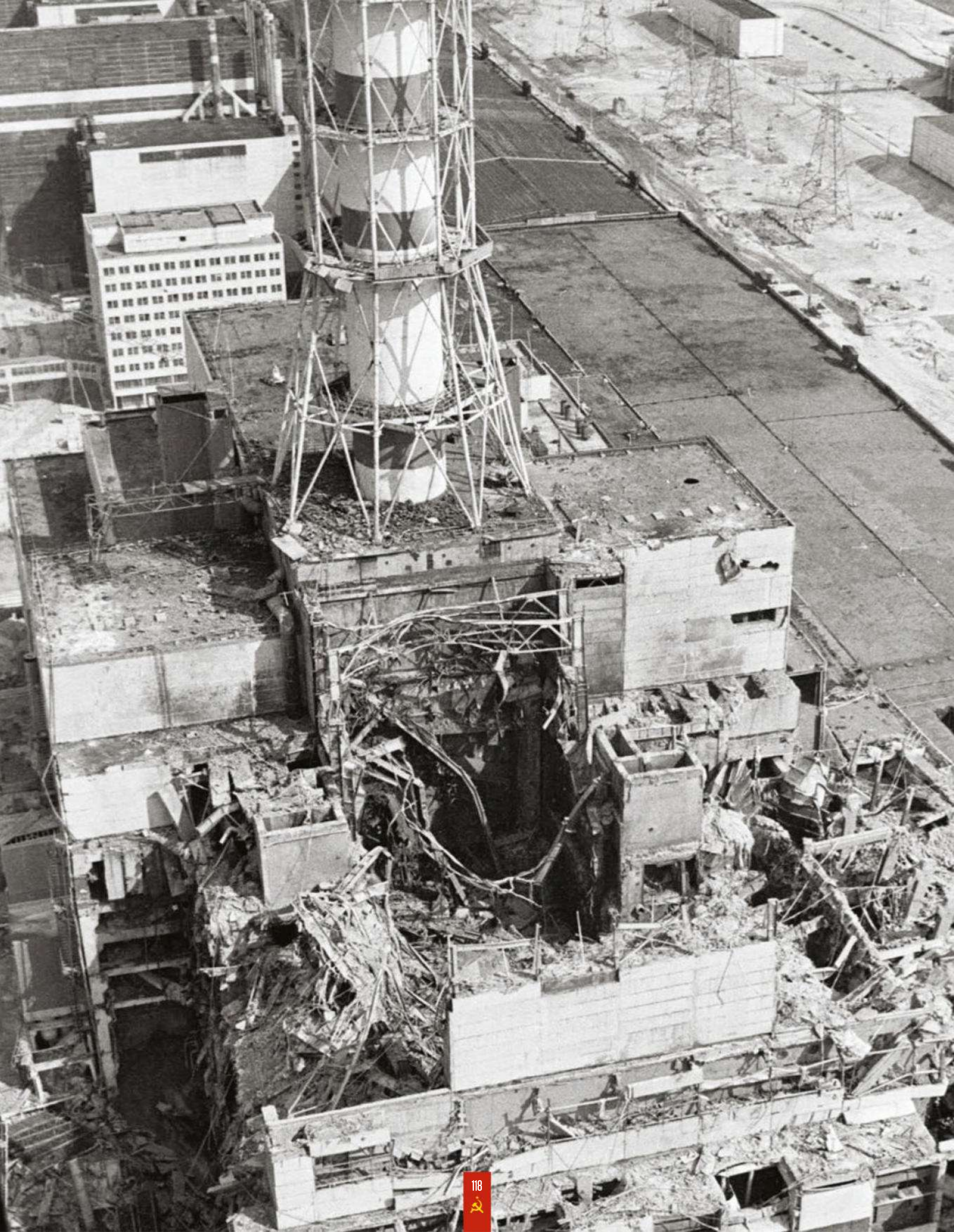


THE CHERNOBYL MELTDOWN

A seemingly routine safety check led to the worst nuclear accident of the 20th century and helped bring about the end of the Soviet Union

Thirty-eight years ago, the world came to understand all the horrifying implications of a nuclear disaster. To many, this gargantuan industrial monster known as the Chernobyl nuclear power plant, constantly spewing out smoke and power, was a sign of the Soviet Union's towering ambitions. Situated in Ukraine, approximately 16 kilometres (ten miles) northwest of the city of Chernobyl, work began on the plant in the 1970s. By 1984, four reactors were active, each one capable of producing one gigawatt of electricity, with the plant itself providing approximately ten per cent of Ukraine's electricity. But the Soviets weren't stopping there. By 1986, two more reactors were being constructed, with ambitions to make Chernobyl one of the world's largest nuclear power stations.

The plant also provided a living for the local inhabitants, and numerous people had moved into the region because of their work at the nuclear power station. In fact, the town of Pripyat had been built in 1970 to house almost 50,000 plant workers and their families, less than three kilometres (two miles) from the sprawling power station. It may have looked industrial and ugly, but it was good for the region's economy and served as a symbol that the Soviets were as technologically advanced as any of the decadent countries in the West.

One of the men who earned their living from the plant was Aleksandr Akimov, a night shift supervisor. On 26 April 1986, he was in charge of a routine safety test on reactor four. In less than two weeks' time he would be dead from severe radiation poisoning from the worst nuclear accident of the 20th century.

The plant may have been highly effective at generating power, but safety concerns had been raised. The four reactors were of the Soviet RBMK design, which produced both plutonium and electric power. This meant that they were

ГОТЕЛЬ ПОЛІССЯ

This hotel in Pripyat has not seen guests since the accident in 1986 different from standard commercial designs, as they employed a unique combination of a graphite moderator and water coolant. Adding to these safety concerns, the reactors were unstable at low power, primarily owing to their control-rod design.

In 1986, the Soviet Union was an interesting place. In five years' time its communist structures would come crashing down and the Soviet Union would be dissolved, leading to the biggest change in Eastern Europe for a generation. However, at the time of the Chernobyl disaster, the old mechanics of government were still clinging on, and the old adage 'knowledge is power' was at the heart of its policies. There were those who were concerned – although given how seriously the Soviet administration took secrecy the numbers in the know were limited – that the Chernobyl plant did not have the massive containment structure common to most nuclear power plants elsewhere in the world. This meant that if an accident occurred radioactive material would not be contained but seep out into the environment and cause untold damage to countless people and their natural surroundings.

This secrecy ran not just to the knowledge held by other countries but also to their own people. Aleksandr Akimov's superior was Anatoly Dyatlov, deputy chief engineer. When the Soviet Union's authorities later tried Dyatlov, desperately looking for scapegoats, he stated that he did not know of the previous accidents that had occurred at reactors of the same type, even though several had. It may seem strange that the authorities wouldn't want those in positions of authority to possess all of the pertinent facts about the equipment they were working with, but such was the culture.

GHOST TOWN

The town of Pripyat is located a mere three kilometres (two miles) away from the nuclear power plant and had a population just under 50,000 at the time of the Chernobyl disaster. It was a growing town with 15 primary schools, five secondary schools, a hospital and sports and recreational facilities, including an Olympic-sized swimming pool. After the accident, residents were evacuated but told they could return in three days' time, meaning that many possessions are still in the city to this day. Some residents have returned to the area, but none have been allowed back into the town, as it is still quarantined due to high levels of radiation.

The city is a historical monument to life in the Soviet Union in the 1980s: the walls still display propaganda slogans and the houses and factories speak of a different era. In some parts nature is reclaiming areas, and in 2002 the city opened as a slightly macabre tourist destination for those willing to sign a waiver in case they suffer or die from radiation poisoning.

COUNTDOWN TO DISASTER

25 APRIL

With reactor four scheduled to be shut down for routine maintenance, the plant's engineers decided to take the opportunity to see whether the cooling pump system could still function using power generated from the reactor under low power should the auxiliary electricity supply ever fail.

11.00 P.M.

Control rods, which regulate the fission process by absorbing neutrons and slowing the chain reaction, are lowered to reduce output to about 20 per cent of normal output required for the test. However, too many rods are lowered and output drops too quickly, resulting in an almost complete shutdown.

12.30 A.M.

The engineers are concerned by the possible instability and begin to raise the rods to increase output, but they ultimately decide to carry on.

01.00 A.M.

Power is still only at about 7%, so more rods are raised. The automatic shutdown system is disabled to allow the reactor to continue working under low power.

01.21 A.M.

50 seconds after the test starts, power levels suddenly surge to dangerous levels and the emergency shutdown button is pressed. However, with power 100 times more than normal, fuel pellets in the core begin to explode, rupturing fuel channels.

01.24 A.M.

Two explosions cause the reactor's roof to be blown off and the contents to erupt outwards. Air sucked into the shattered reactor causes a reactor fire and, as the reactor is not housed in a reinforced concrete shell, large amounts of radioactive debris escape into the atmosphere.

There are conflicting reports about the circumstances of the disaster, with some claiming that Akimov and other engineers were reluctant to carry out the test but were pressured into doing so by Dyatlov. Dyatlov later countered this and said the atmosphere in the plant was normal and no one was anxious about the test proceeding. The test was to examine whether the reactor could operate under electricity generated by its own turbines and produce a backup source of electricity to keep the reactor going in the event of a general power failure. Several safety features that could have interfered with the test were deliberately turned off.

The test began, and it soon became apparent that something was wrong. The emergency shutdown button was pressed. Nothing happened.

In a 1992 interview, Dyatlov said of the incident: "I thought my eyes were coming out of my sockets. There was no way to explain it. It was clear this was not a normal accident, but something much more terrible. It was a catastrophe."

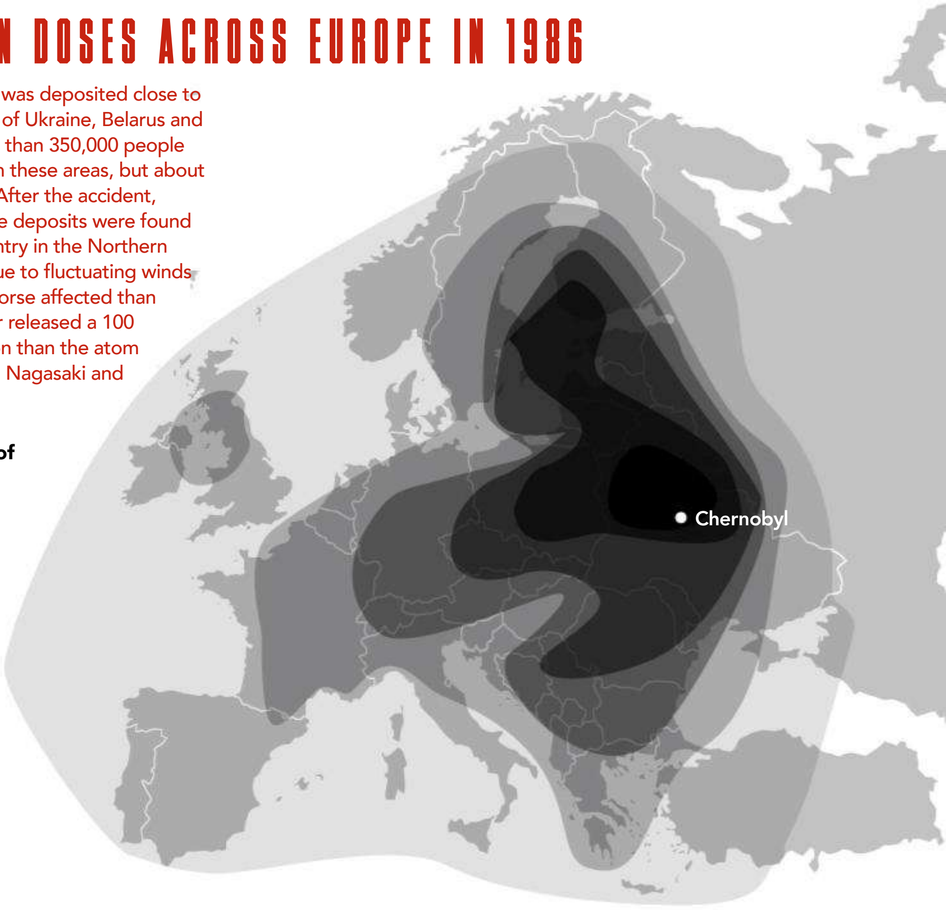
After only a minute reactor four's roof was suddenly blown off into the air and radiation

began seeping out of it. The dozen people in the control room – including Akimov and Dyatlov – were exposed to shocking levels of radiation and five of them died soon afterwards from radiation burns. The radiation levels in the worst-hit areas of the reactor building have been estimated to be 5.6 roentgens per second (R/s). A lethal dose is around 500 roentgens over five hours, meaning that some workers received fatal doses in less than a minute. Unfortunately for those working in the contaminated area, a dosimeter (which measures an individual or object's exposure to radiated energy) capable of measuring up to 1,000 R/s was buried in the rubble of a collapsed part of the building, and another one failed when turned on. All remaining dosimeters had limits of 0.001 R/s and simply read 'off scale'. Therefore, the reactor crew could only ascertain that the radiation levels were somewhere above 0.001 R/s and did not have confirmation of the truth: that the radiation was life-threatening.

Due to these inaccurate low readings, Akimov assumed the reactor was intact, although to come to this conclusion he ignored the assorted pieces of graphite and reactor fuel lying around the building and the high readings of another dosimeter brought in that was dismissed as 'defective'. Whether Akimov really thought the reactor was intact or he knew the importance of averting further disaster is mere conjecture.

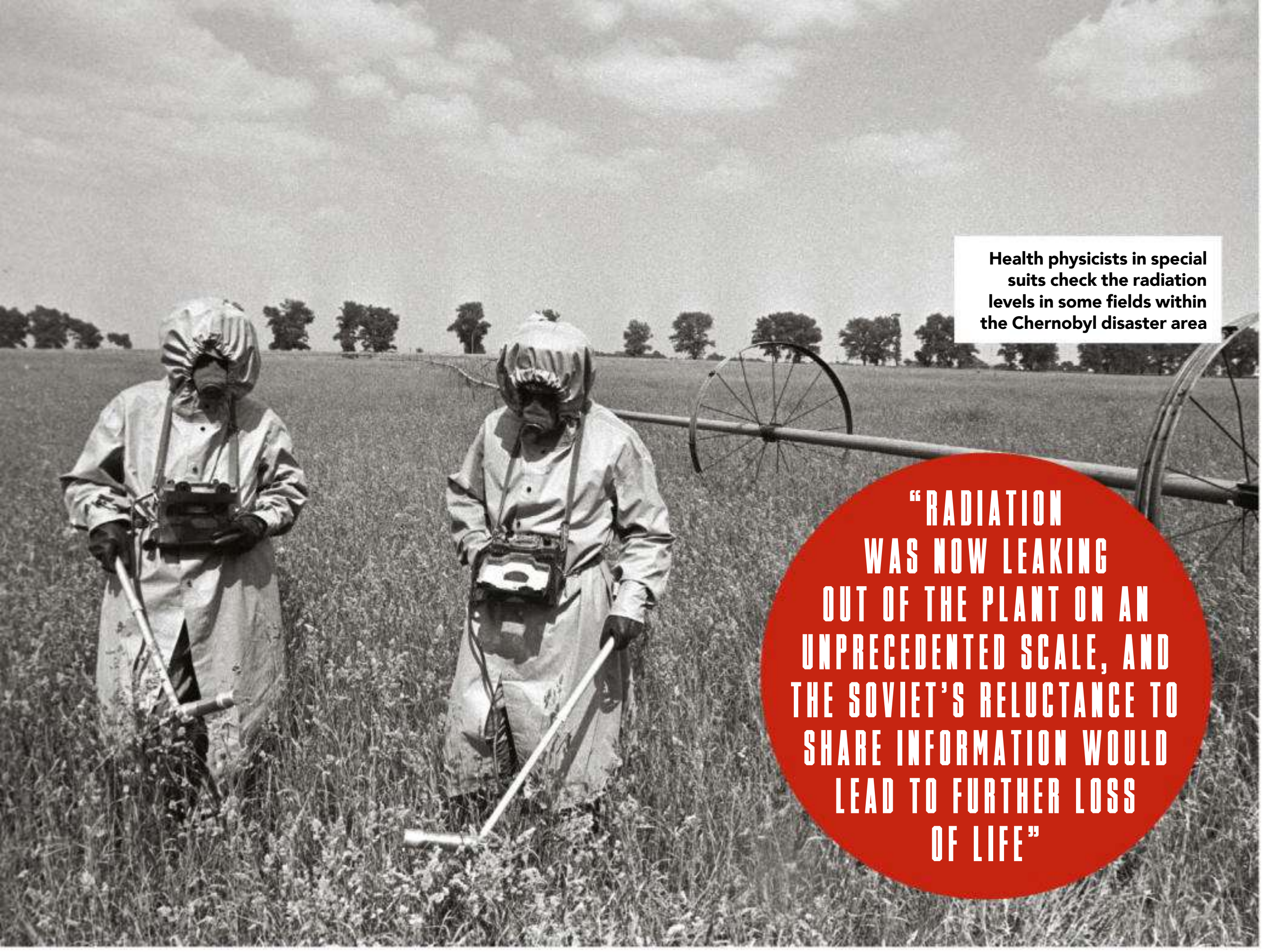
RADIATION DOSES ACROSS EUROPE IN 1986

Much of the fallout was deposited close to Chernobyl, in parts of Ukraine, Belarus and Russia, where more than 350,000 people resettled away from these areas, but about 5.5 million remain. After the accident, traces of radioactive deposits were found in nearly every country in the Northern Hemisphere, but due to fluctuating winds some areas were worse affected than others. The disaster released a 100 times more radiation than the atom bombs dropped on Nagasaki and Hiroshima in WWII.



Dose = multiples of normal rate

■	10^2 - 1
■	1 - 5
■	5 - 10
■	10 - 20
■	20 - 40
■	40 - 100
■	100+



Health physicists in special suits check the radiation levels in some fields within the Chernobyl disaster area

“RADIATION WAS NOW LEAKING OUT OF THE PLANT ON AN UNPRECEDENTED SCALE, AND THE SOVIET’S RELUCTANCE TO SHARE INFORMATION WOULD LEAD TO FURTHER LOSS OF LIFE”

What is a fact is that he stayed with his crew in the reactor building until morning, sending his crew to try to pump water into the reactor, with none of them wearing protective gear.

The radiation leak wasn’t the only danger. In flagrant disregard of safety regulations, a combustible material called bitumen had been used in the construction of the reactor building and turbine hall’s roof. Parts of the exploded roof from reactor four landed onto the roof of the still-operating reactor three and several fires sprung up. A Chernobyl Power Station firefighter brigade was first on the scene to try and extinguish the inferno, with the main objective being to douse the fires around reactors three and four and ensure that reactor three’s cooling system was kept intact.

One of the firefighters was Lieutenant Colonel Leonid Telyatnikov. In an interview with *People* magazine years later he recalled: “It was a clear night with lots of stars. I had no idea what had happened, but as I approached the plant I could see debris on fire all around, like sparklers. Then I noticed a bluish glow above the wreckage of reactor four and pockets of fire on surrounding buildings. It was absolutely silent and eerie.”

The firefighters managed to control the blast, but with none of them wearing any radiation protection it was inevitable there would be casualties, especially for those combating the flames on the roof. Six of the firefighters died following their exposure and many others suffered long-lasting damage. It’s hard to overstate the importance of their actions; an explosion in reactor three could have led to the destruction of all four reactors and the world would have faced a far greater disaster.

Further catastrophe may have been averted due to the bravery of the plant engineers and firefighters, but radiation was now leaking out of the plant at an unprecedented scale in modern history, and the Soviets’ reluctance to share information – even when their citizens were at risk – would lead to further loss of life. The nearby city of Pripyat was not immediately evacuated after the incident, and with the townspeople oblivious to events just down the road, many of them fell ill and complained of a metallic taste in their mouth before suffering uncontrollable fits of coughing and vomiting. Soviet authorities started evacuating people from the area around Chernobyl within 36 hours of the accident and told the people who were forced to leave their homes that it was only a temporary measure and that they were safe to leave behind personal possessions. A month later all those living within a 30-kilometre (18-mile) radius of the nuclear power plant – over 100,000 people – had been relocated.

The actions of the local authorities in evacuating the surrounding area were slow, but they were positively proactive compared to the national response. The general population wasn’t informed of the incident until several days later, and even then it was a 20-second announcement on a TV news programme: “An accident occurred at the Chernobyl Atomic Power Plant and one of the reactors was damaged. Measures have been undertaken to eliminate the consequences of the accident.” The only reason this statement was made was because of events occurring in Sweden.

On Monday, 28 April, 55 hours after the explosion at reactor four, an alarm sounded at the Forsmark Nuclear Power Station in Sweden; high

FACTS

50,000
People working as ‘bio-robots’ engaged in the clean up

15
The number of days the fire in reactor four continued to burn

38 YEARS
Since the accident occurred in Pripyat

350,400
People evacuated from the most contaminated areas

60%
How much of the deadly nuclear fallout landed in Belarus

The New Safe Confinement zone cost approximately £1.3 billion to build

CHERNOBYL'S NEW TOMB

The effects of the Chernobyl disaster are still widely felt, with different agencies varying in their estimates of the amount of deaths it caused. The World Health Organisation put the figure at 4,000, whereas Greenpeace believe it is at least 10,000 and perhaps considerably higher. The economic costs have also been devastating, with Mikhail Gorbachev claiming the Soviet Union spent 18 billion rubles (equivalent to about £157 million) on containment and decontamination, virtually bankrupting itself. It wasn't until quite recently that the issue of safely confining the radiation was finally settled.

The long-term plan for the containment of reactor four is the New Safe Confinement (NSC), a 31,000-ton steel arch intended to prevent any radiation leakage into the environment for the next 100 years. The structure is 108 metres (354 feet) high, 162 metres (531 feet) long and 257 metres (843 feet) wide. Initial plans were for the NSC to be in place by 2005, but it wasn't completed until 2018. Until then, a hastily built sarcophagus had sheltered the reactor since 1986, and there had been serious concerns over its long-term effectiveness.

With the hulking new sarcophagus in place, robotic cranes were used to dismantle the ruins of the Soviet-era reactor inside, along with the original sarcophagus.

Ownership of the NSC was transferred to the Ukrainian Government in 2019. It was temporarily seized by invading Russian troops in February 2022, but control of the area was handed back to Ukraine little over a month later.

amounts of radioactivity were being detected and workers were evacuated. As the alarm sounded other nuclear power stations across Scandinavia also detected high radiation levels coming from an incoming nuclear cloud that had originated in the Soviet Union. When asked for an explanation, the Soviets Union's response was predictable; they denied anything had happened. It was only after the Scandinavian countries had announced the source of immense radiation that Moscow issued the statement above.

The day after the incident a government commission was set up and reactors one and two were shut down. A Soviet officer named General Vladimir Pikalov set out in a truck fitted with radiation apparatus and rammed through the closed gates to measure the radiation. He established that the graphite in the reactor was burning and that it was giving off an enormous amount of radiation and heat. Shortly afterwards, the town of Pripyat was evacuated, but further mistakes were then made.

First, water was added, but the high temperature separated the water into hydrogen and oxygen and the resultant explosion released heat. Thus, the fire was not starved but fanned. After three fruitless attempts, the authorities threw sand, lead and boron carbide onto the reactor from helicopters. This caused the temperature to drop, but all those in the helicopters died soon after – of unrelated causes, according to Moscow. It took ten days to fully extinguish the flames.

With the fire out, those in power began looking for people to blame. To point the finger at substandard equipment would have been tantamount to admitting that the mighty Soviet Union lagged behind its global competitors in matters of technology or safety. It was far better to put the blame on human error. Over 25 members of the Communist Party were expelled for their 'role' in the disaster, and six Chernobyl workers were accused of violating safety rules during experiments on reactor four. Dyatlov was accused of sending four subordinates to inspect the burning reactor without telling them of the radiation hazard. All of them were found guilty.

The government finally had their scapegoats, but, just like the radiation leaking out of reactor four, the political consequences of the accident could not be contained and one of the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster was the eventual demise of the Soviet Union.

The disaster at Chernobyl caused great suffering, but it was also a turning point in the Soviet Union's history and ultimate dissolution. It proved that, towards the end of the 20th century, a government that seemingly cared so little for the safety of its citizens was no longer sustainable. As the last Soviet president, Mikhail Gorbachev, wrote in 2006, 20 years after the catastrophe, "The Chernobyl disaster, more than anything else, opened the possibility of much greater freedom of expression, to the point that the system as we knew it could no longer continue."

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FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE:

10 GREAT SOVIET MOVIES

Count down the top ten to discover which films rocked the Soviet box office

WRITTEN BY SCOTT REEVES

The formation of the USSR coincided with the rise of a new form of entertainment: the cinema. But whereas the motion-picture industry in the United States saw many different film studios vie for supremacy in Hollywood, Soviet cinema was nationalised and heavily regulated by bureaucrats in Moscow. Movies were only allowed to hit the screen if they portrayed Soviet ideology in favourable ways – a style that became officially sanctioned as 'Soviet realism'. Scenes that censors considered problematic were cut, reshot or edited until they were acceptable. Directors and filmmakers who repeatedly pushed the boundaries were at risk of punishment. Even one of the nation's most famous directors, Sergei Parajanov, found himself serving four years in prison on trumped-up charges that were little more than an attempt to shut down his filmmaking. Despite the restrictions, Soviet cinema still produced many celluloid classics over the decades, as we explore here.

BATTLESHIP POTEMKIN

DIRECTOR: SERGEI EISENSTEIN **RELEASE YEAR:** 1925

The first great movie of Soviet cinema, *Battleship Potemkin* was commissioned to mark the 20th anniversary of the 1905 Revolution and its bloody suppression by Tsar Nicholas II. Sergei Eisenstein's film came together quickly and premiered at the Bolshoi Theatre on 21 December 1925, less than nine months after shooting began. The film follows the crew of the *Potemkin*, who mutiny against their officers and receive a heroes' welcome when they dock at Odessa.

In the film's most celebrated scene, the Tsar's Cossacks massacre Russian civilians on a long-ceremonial stairway from the dock to the city. The soldiers' robotic, unemotional advance contrasts with the suffering of the victims and became an iconic moment in cinematic history, albeit one that probably didn't happen in real life.

THE CRANES ARE FLYING

DIRECTOR: MIKHAIL KALATOZOV

RELEASE YEAR: 1957

Twelve years on from the end of the Great Patriotic War, the first great war film was released to Soviet cinemas. *The Cranes Are Flying* examines the effects of war on the Soviet people through the lens of Veronika, a young woman whose boyfriend volunteers to fight with the Soviet Air Force. During his absence, Veronika is compelled to marry her boyfriend's cousin after he rapes her, and later her boyfriend is killed in action.

The Cranes Are Flying marks one of the first films in which a female has both a leading role and is portrayed as a multi-dimensional, complicated character, and it won the Palme d'Or for best film at the Cannes Film Festival.

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THE COLOR OF POMEGRANATES

DIRECTOR: SERGEI PARAJANOV **RELEASE YEAR:** 1969

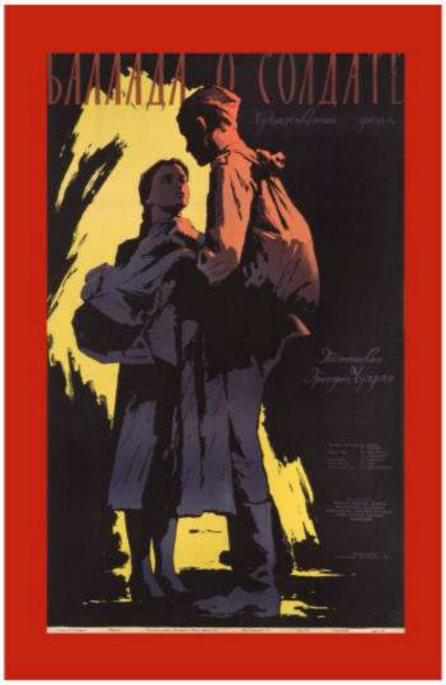
A celebration of the life of Armenian singer-poet Sayat-Nova, *The Color of Pomegranates* pushed Soviet censors to the limit. The Soviet film board insisted that the film be renamed from its working title 'Sayat-Nova' since they felt it didn't educate the audience enough about the poet. They also didn't like director Sergei Parajanov's stylised film and use of religious imagery and restricted the film's release to Armenia. Only when some of the religious scenes were cut and the film was re-edited was it given a wider release, where it was hailed as a classic. Actress Sofiko Chiaureli illustrated her breadth of talent by playing six different roles, including both male and female characters.

BALLAD OF A SOLDIER

DIRECTOR: GRIGORY CHUKHRAY

RELEASE YEAR: 1959

Although *Ballad of a Soldier* is set during the Great Patriotic War (WWII), it's actually a love story framed by the war. As an army private travels home on leave, where he meets with a young woman supposedly on a dangerous trip to see her fiancé. She soon falls in love with the private. Back home, the private has only a few minutes to spend with his mother before he returns to the front, but the young woman makes it clear that her love for him is unconditional and she'll wait as long as is necessary for him. *Ballad of a Soldier* wasn't just well received in the USSR – it also won praise from American critics when it had a rare American cinematic release in 1960.



> "*BALLAD OF A SOLDIER* WASN'T JUST WELL RECEIVED IN THE USSR, IT ALSO WON PRAISE FROM AMERICAN CRITICS"

SOLARIS

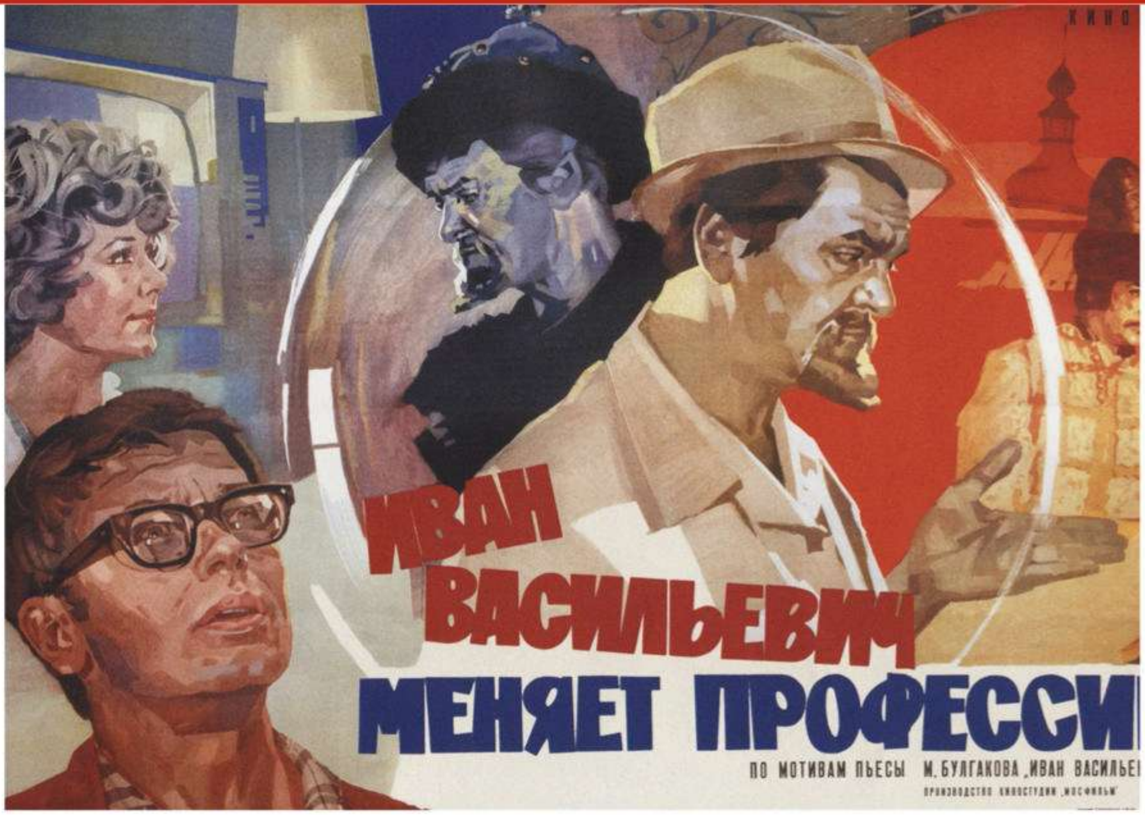
DIRECTOR: ANDREI TARKOVSKY RELEASE YEAR: 1972

At the height of the Space Race with the U.S., director Andrei Tarkovsky launched into orbit with *Solaris* – a sci-fi movie based on Polish writer Stanisław Lem's novel. Set aboard a space station orbiting the fictional planet Solaris, the plot follows a crew of three as they struggle with isolation and emotional crises. The choice of a space station setting was a very deliberate one. Although the U.S. had landed the first man on the Moon in 1969, the USSR was ahead in the quest to put a manned space station in orbit, although the film questions whether space exploration is worth the human cost. It was certainly worth making *Solaris* – the film was nominated for the Palme d'Or and inspired a 2002 American remake.

IVAN VASILYEVICH CHANGES HIS PROFESSION

DIRECTOR: LEONID GAIDAI RELEASE YEAR: 1973

Sixty million Soviets flocked to the cinema in 1973 to watch Leonid Gaidai's new comedy. *Ivan Vasilyevich Changes His Profession* begins with a Moscow engineer working on a time machine in his apartment, only to accidentally send his building's superintendent (the Ivan Vasilyevich of the film's title) back in time, where he swaps identities with a lookalike: Tsar Ivan IV. Comedic capers ensue as Ivan the Terrible tries to keep his true identity from the other Ivan's wife, while back in the 16th century, Ivan Vasilyevich must pretend to be the ruthless emperor. *Ivan Vasilyevich Changes His Profession* is still fondly remembered by many Russians today and marked the high point of comic actor Yury Yakovlev's film career.


КИНО
ИВАН
ВАСИЛЬЕВИЧ
МЕНЯЕТ ПРОФЕССИ
ПО МОТИВАМ ПЬЕСЫ М. БУЛГАКОВА „ИВАН ВАСИЛЬЕ
ПРОИЗВОДСТВО КИНОСТУДИИ „МОСФИЛЬМ"

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MIRROR

DIRECTOR: ANDREI TARKOVSKY   RELEASE YEAR: 1975

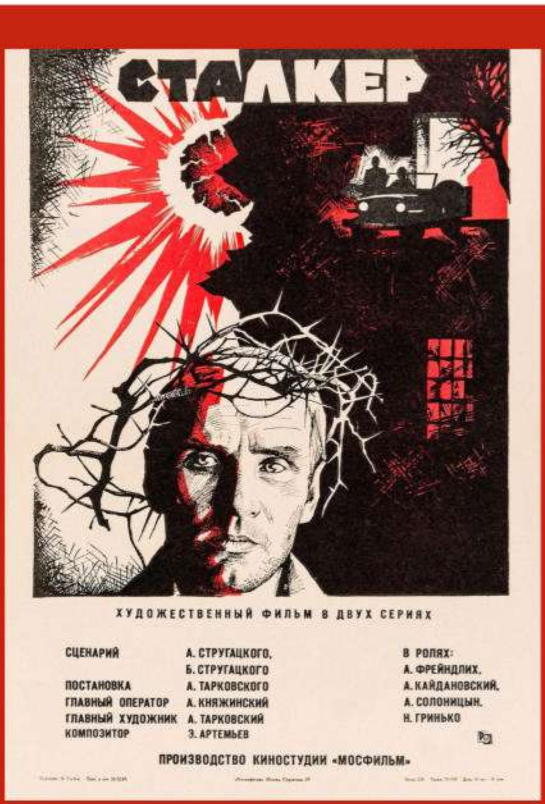
Director Andrei Tarkovsky's passion project, *Mirror* was loosely based on his own life and switches between three timeframes: 1935, the 1940s and the 1960s. It follows dying poet Aleksei as he recalls his life as a child, adolescent and middle-aged man, immersing Aleksei in experiences that Tarkovsky himself was familiar with. Aleksei's mother, like Tarkovsky's, is a proofreader, and Aleksei is evacuated from Moscow during the Great Patriotic War, just as Tarkovsky was. *Mirror* initially polarised critics and audiences, many of whom struggled with the film's non-linear narrative and poetic approach. As a result, it was released into cinemas with little fanfare. Since then, *Mirror* has been reappraised and judged to be one of the Soviet era's best.

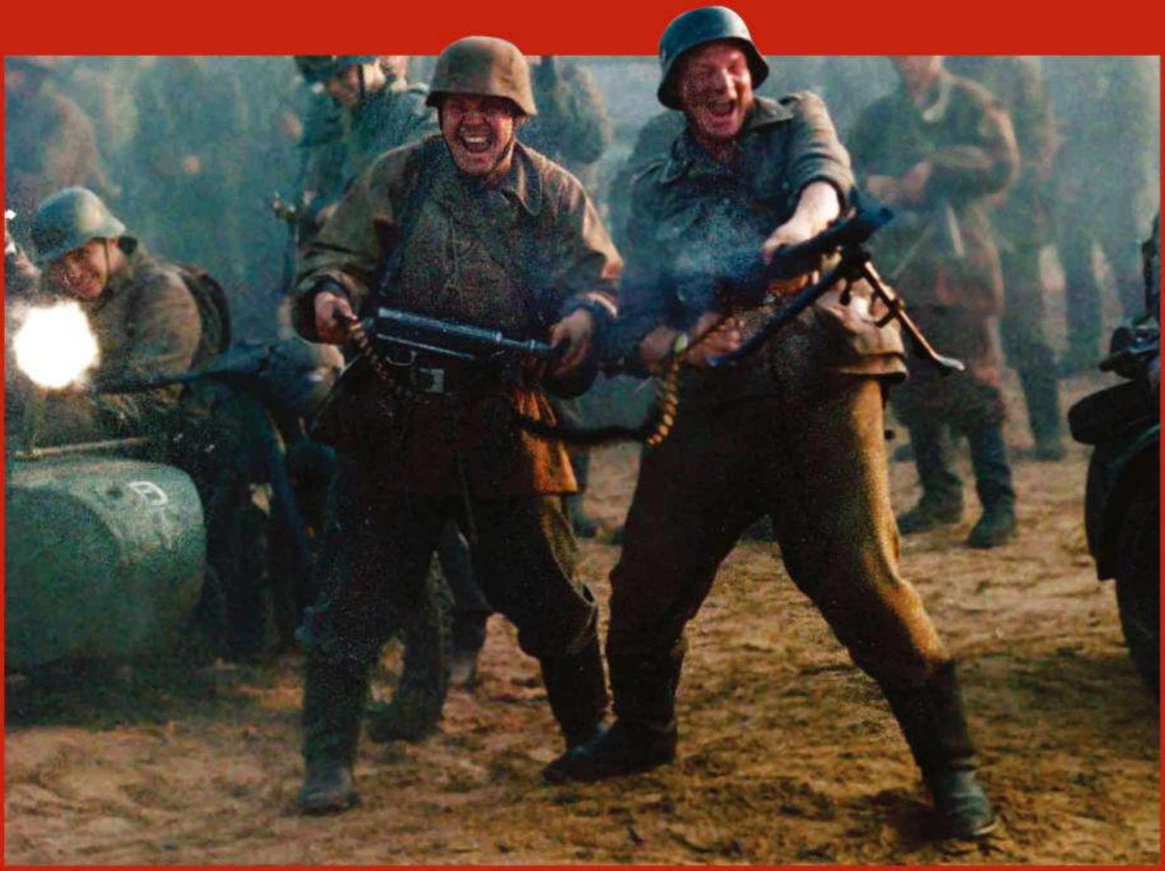
STALKER

DIRECTOR: ANDREI TARKOVSKY RELEASE YEAR: 1979

Stalker was the last of Andrei Tarkovsky's five films shot in the USSR. Soon after its release, Tarkovsky fell out with Soviet censors and shot his final two films abroad. In this sci-fi fantasy, the eponymous Stalker guides two clients through a dystopian wasteland to a mysterious room in which their innermost desires are granted.

Production of *Stalker* was marred by mishaps. A year's worth of outdoor scenes were binned after Tarkovsky discovered the film had been improperly developed, leaving the footage unusable. Several crew members died after filming in toxic locations, and audiences were initially unimpressed upon its release. Recent critics, however, have been kinder, applauding *Stalker* as a clever appraisal of late-Soviet communism.


СТАЛКЕР
ХУДОЖЕСТВЕННЫЙ ФИЛЬМ В ДВУХ СЕРИЯХ
СЦЕНАРИЙ А. СТРУГАЦКОГО, Б. СТРУГАЦКОГО
ПОСТАНОВКА А. ТАРКОВСКОГО
ГЛАВНЫЙ ОПЕРАТОР А. КНЯЖИНСКИЙ
ГЛАВНЫЙ ХУДОЖНИК А. ТАРКОВСКИЙ
КОМПОЗИТОР Э. АРТЕМЬЕВ
В РОЛЯХ:
А. ФРЕЙНДЛИХ,
А. КАЙДАНОВСКИЙ,
А. СОЛОНИЦЫН,
Н. ГРИНЬКО
ПРОИЗВОДСТВО КИНОСТУДИИ «МОСФИЛЬМ»



COME AND SEE

DIRECTOR: ELEM KLIMOV

RELEASE YEAR: 1985

Come and See focuses on the Nazi occupation of Belarus during the Great Patriotic War and views the action through the eyes of a teenager who joins the Soviet partisans fighting the invaders. Unlike many postwar films that focus on the glory of the Soviet victory, *Come and See* has an anti-war slant and graphically depicts the suffering of the Belarusian people. That created problems for Soviet censors, who refused to greenlight production for eight years until they finally caved to director Elem Klimov's repeated attempts to gain permission. Klimov was right to play the long game; he was eventually authorised to shoot the film without any changes to its screenplay, and *Come and See* was the USSR's sixth-most watched movie in 1986.

DEAD MAN'S LETTERS

DIRECTOR: KONSTANTIN LOPUSHANSKY RELEASE YEAR: 1986

The liberalisation of the USSR under Mikhail Gorbachev was reflected in the Soviet film board, which finally authorised the shooting of *Dead Man's Letters* after it was shelved by the censors for three years. The film takes place in the aftermath of a nuclear apocalypse and follows a group of survivors who live in underground bunkers. *Dead Man's Letters* is a critique of the doctrine of mutually assured destruction and reflects the themes of similar movies being made on the other side of the Cold War ideological divide: in *Dead Man's Letters*, the first missile that began nuclear war is revealed to have been fired by mistake, while in Hollywood's *WarGames*, nuclear war is almost unwittingly started by a young computer hacker.

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FALL OF THE BERLIN WALL

After almost three decades dividing the fractured city of Berlin, the most iconic symbol of the Cold War's divisions came tumbling down in spectacular fashion

For 28 years, the Berlin Wall stood resolute, an imposing symbol of the Soviet Union's cast-iron hold over much of Eastern Europe. For almost three decades, the citizens of the Wall's Eastern side lived under the watchful eye of the German Democratic Republic, a semi-autonomous government laid in place by its Soviet masters in Moscow. Heavily guarded and laced with barbed wire, the 155-kilometre-long (96-mile), 3.6-metre-high (11.8-foot) structure ensured the German capital remained divided through the fearful years of the Cold War. No East German was permitted to cross the border into the West, the sights and sounds of a free Berlin a few hundred yards away a constant reminder of how fractured Europe had become in the decades following the end of World War II. But as the 1980s drew to a close, this symbol of division became the breaking point in European socialism. Based in Denmark at the time, science and technology student Andreas Ramos travelled to Berlin to witness first-hand the frustrations of a continent finally boil over.

"When I went to study at Heidelberg (in southwest Germany) in 1978 no one in government, academia or the general public could imagine the Berlin Wall would ever fall or the Soviet Union could collapse," explains Ramos. "NATO was built on the premise of eternal conflict with the USSR. But by the mid-1980s, after the USSR's failure in Afghanistan, it was clear the Soviet Union had to change. But collapse? They simply hadn't planned for change. It all happened on the streets, not within the government. I was in Germany for seven years and then went to Denmark to work on a doctoral dissertation. I'd been to Berlin many times and had friends there. From the edge of the Wall we watched everything, and when the East Germans began to tear down the Wall, we joined them."

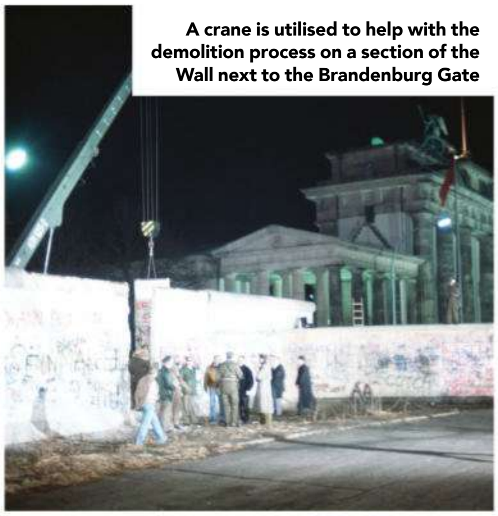
"FROM THE EDGE OF THE WALL WE WATCHED EVERYTHING, AND WHEN THE EAST GERMANS BEGAN TO TEAR DOWN THE WALL, WE JOINED THEM"

A month prior, the first metaphorical cracks in the Soviet Union's hold on Eastern Europe had started to show. Communication between Moscow and the German Democratic Republic (GDR) Government led by hardline party leader Erich Honecker had broken down as the Motherland struggled to contain its rapidly unravelling vision for a united socialist future. Up until this point, the borders of the Eastern Bloc remained intact, but the growing pressure from refugees attempting to flee the failing communist system became too much for the neighbouring Hungarian Government to ignore. On 19 August 1989, Hungary effectively opened its physical borders and allowed over 13,000 East Germans to surge across the border into Austria. As the refugees sought sanctuary in the West German embassy, it sent a shock wave through the infrastructure of the Eastern Bloc, a wave that would reach all the way to Berlin and beyond.

Back in the capital, the streets were more alive than ever. A previously morose and subdued city was suddenly bustling as its citizens took up arms in peaceful protests. East Berliners could sense the government was starting to unravel. The resignation of Erich Honecker, the staunch idealist who had stated only months before that the Berlin Wall would stand tall for a century to come, had galvanised the nation's hope for change. The 'Peaceful Revolution', as it came to be known, reached its height on 4 November 1989, an event that attracted Ramos and many others to Berlin. Arriving on the afternoon of 9 November, Ramos could sense an air of tension, but also one of hope. "The build-up wasn't just in Germany; it was the whole year of revolutions across Eastern Europe. The Soviet Bloc was disintegrating, one nation after another," comments Ramos. "As we made our way into West Germany we could all sense that the whole continent was about to change forever."

That evening the inevitable finally became a reality. In the weeks since Honecker's forced resignation, his successors had attempted to rejuvenate the party's reputation by holding a series of press conferences that promised radical changes to national policies. Shortly before that day's official press conference, GDR's official and unofficial spokesman Günter Schabowski was handed a small note that confirmed all East Berliners were now allowed to cross the border into the West with the proper identification. However, without any other explanation to help him digest this news, Schabowski was thrust in front of a ravenous media. One garbled and mostly improvised statement later and it was official: the once impenetrable gates of East Germany were opening. The problem was, this news wasn't communicated down to the guards and officials manning the many guard posts along the Wall. With frustration building among the crowds of East Berliners, the situation was a powder keg waiting to explode.

As the news started to flood across East Berlin, hundreds of people began to gather at each checkpoint demanding to be let through into West Berlin. To Colombian-born Ramos, it was utter chaos, but it was chaos charged by hope rather than anger. "It was November and it was extremely cold that night, but in the excitement everyone was milling around in anticipation. Restaurants and bars, which by law were meant to close, were all open well into the early hours. Laws became meaningless that night," he recalls. "People came from all over Europe: we spoke in many languages.


A crane is utilised to help with the demolition process on a section of the Wall next to the Brandenburg Gate

East Germans gathered at the Berlin Wall in November 1989 with sledgehammers and axes to tear it down

There were British, French, Spaniards, Italians, Greeks and many Scandinavians, plus, of course, the Germans. That night, Berlin was Europe. Remember, at the time, there were no cell phones, no video, no Twitter, no Facebook, no selfies, so remarkably, there aren't that many photos of that night. Today there would be billions of photos."

As Ramos and his friends approached the Wall itself, the air seemed alight with a mixture of confusion, frustration and apprehension. "As the news of the law changing spread it became a massive sense of relief, of 'it's over', of excitement. After decades of baseless promises from politicians and pointless dreams of uniting of families, it suddenly became possible in a delirious joy," he says. "Someone wrote it was the world's largest street party, and it was – 5 million people in one city. East Germans flooded across the borders and went visiting throughout all of Germany. The cities declared free bus and streetcar tickets for them, free museums and zoos, free everything for the visiting East Germans. It was an incredible time."

> "IT WAS CLEAR THAT BOTH GOVERNMENTS, EAST AND WEST GERMAN, PLUS THE U.S. MILITARY, HAD LOST CONTROL"

The Wall was suddenly no longer the impenetrable barrier to another world. East Berliners were flooding into the other side of the city while others started attacking the Wall with any tool they could find. The military looked on dumbfounded. Some of them even joined in the demolition job. "It was clear that both governments, East and West German, plus the U.S. military, had lost control," says Ramos. "They stood by helplessly, watching everyone bustle around. I talked with East German soldiers who told me their rifles were empty. No bullets. They looked forward to coming across the border. West German police, who are always so orderly and authoritative, just watched. They didn't know what to do; this had never been planned. Many of us pushed through the Wall and went to the East Berlin side. It was mutual: West Germans and East Germans tore down the Wall together to unite themselves once more."

Breaking down the Wall itself was no easy task, but it became a cathartic coming together of a nation suddenly reunited in a matter of hours after decades of division. Citizens from East and West gathered on each side to start hacking away, pulling away chunks and lofting them on high, like mementos from a fun day out.

Ramos found himself embedded right in the middle of the crowds tearing into the Wall on that fateful evening. "Opening the Wall went on for hours," he says. "It was made of thick slabs of concrete, nine or twelve feet (three or four metres) high. Small holes were made with hammers, but to open the Wall [up] so large numbers of people could pass, industrial machinery was needed. "Somehow, West German construction companies showed up with jackhammers and cranes which broke apart the slabs and then lifted them out of the way."

In the months that followed, Germany was unified as a single, free nation for the first time since the final shots of WWII and Europe – and the world – was changed forever. Germany would go on to become an economic superpower, but that chilly evening in Berlin has remained an iconic image of social and political upheaval.

"It was one of the most astonishing events of my life. It was 25 years ago and I still remember so many moments, especially the mood," recalls Ramos of that historic day.

"The fall of the Berlin Wall ended a chapter of European history reaching back more than a hundred years. However, it also opened a new chapter, and [people at the time of the Wall's destruction thought] so far, we don't yet know what it's going to be or where it's going to lead."

We know today that it symbolised the beginning of the end for the Soviet Union.

BETONDEMONTAGETE
LOVE & PEACE IN WEST & EAST

Climbing the Wall became a symbolic action that united the nation

TIMELINE OF A NATION UNITING

WARNING SIGNS
Prior to the Wall's physical collapse, the political landscape regarding it is already falling apart. The opening of Hungary's borders with Austria can be seen as the initial catalyst.
19 August 1989

PEACEFUL PROTEST
Following a similar influx of refugees into a now open Czechoslovakia, a series of peaceful protests are organised across the entirety of East Berlin.
4 September

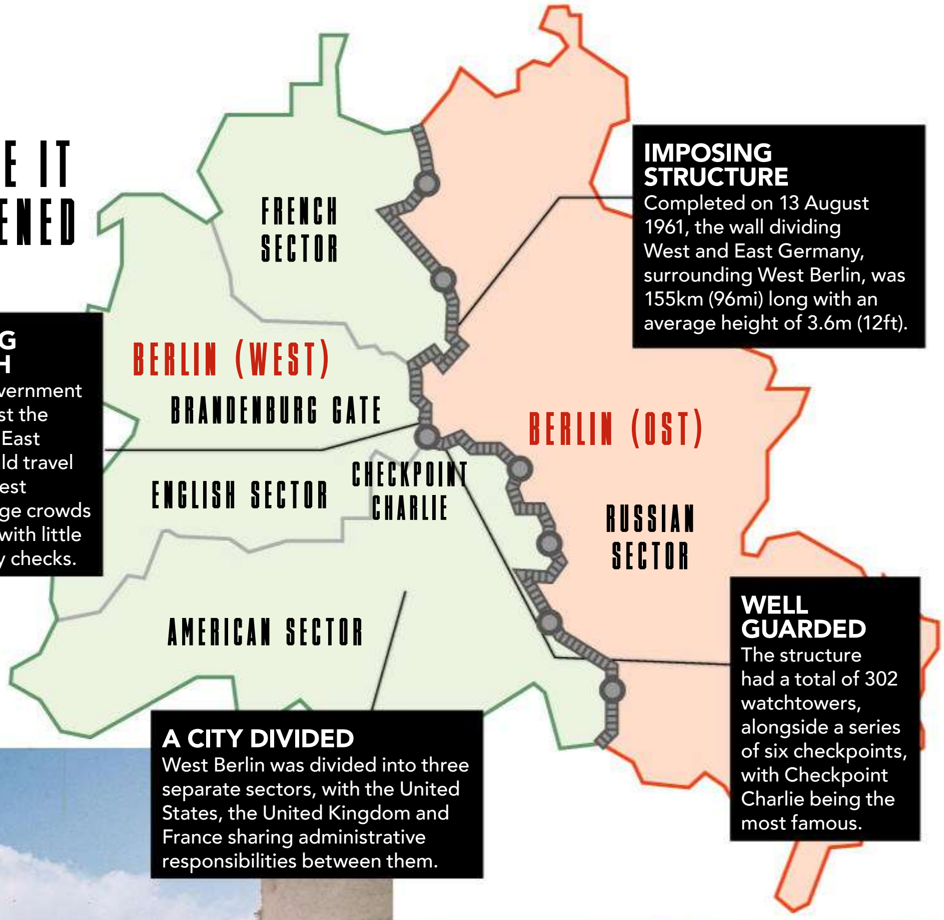
HONECKER RESIGNS
East German leader Erick Honecker is forced to resign by his own party after refusing to change the city's extremely strict immigration policies.
18 October

WE ARE THE PEOPLE
With Erick Honecker and his 'shoot to kill' edict removed, the Peaceful Revolution of 1989 reaches its height. The chant "We are the people!" echoes through the streets of East German cities.
4 November

RUMOURS ABOUND
Crowds begin to gather all along the Berlin Wall as rumours of a policy change run amok.
9.30 a.m.
9 November

BORDER ANNOUNCEMENT
The GDR holds a press conference where it announces all GDR citizens are permitted to cross over to West Berlin.
1.00 p.m.

WHERE IT HAPPENED



BREAKING THROUGH

Once the government had broadcast the edict that all East Berliners could travel freely into West Germany, large crowds passed over with little or no identity checks.

IMPOSING STRUCTURE

Completed on 13 August 1961, the wall dividing West and East Germany, surrounding West Berlin, was 155km (96mi) long with an average height of 3.6m (12ft).

A CITY DIVIDED

West Berlin was divided into three separate sectors, with the United States, the United Kingdom and France sharing administrative responsibilities between them.

WELL GUARDED

The structure had a total of 302 watchtowers, alongside a series of six checkpoints, with Checkpoint Charlie being the most famous.

The Wall is now consigned to history, but it remains a potent reminder of Germany's past

ORIGINS AND AFTERMATH

Following the end of World War II in 1945, Germany was split into four distinct zones, with each one administered by each of the main Allied forces. Berlin itself was divided in two, with West Berlin existing as a free city and East Berlin absorbed into the increasing Soviet sphere of influence in Eastern Europe. In 1961, the semi-autonomous communist government the German Democratic Republic – under direction from the Kremlin – decreed that a new wall would be erected to physically divide the city in two, effectively cutting East Berliners off from the rest of the Western world. For 28 years, the Berlin Wall signified a city evolving in two very different directions. When the first East Berlin citizens passed the guard patrols into the free West Berlin, it was the start of the breaking up of the Eastern Bloc and the first steps towards a unified Germany that would see it become an economic powerhouse.

THE RUSH BEGINS

The first few East Berliners make their way into the West as guards quickly lose control of the situation.

5.05 p.m.

MEDIA ANNOUNCEMENT

Huge crowds gather at the Berlin Wall, hacking it to pieces as the media televises the scenes around the world.

8.00 p.m.

OFFICIAL WORD

Despite multiple breaches in the Wall, the Brandenburg Gate is officially opened to allow all Berliners to pass through.

22 December

REUNITED

With the Wall itself almost completely demolished, East and West Germany are united in a formal ceremony. The U.S., British and French governments relinquish stewardship of West Berlin to the newly united and democratic German Government.

3 October 1990

THE COLD WAR WANES

With an ailing economy and a new leader, the Soviet Union gradually fell apart, heralding the end of the Cold War

With the dawn of the 1980s, the communist bloc began unravelling, and with the demise of the Soviet Union, the Cold War passed into history. During the 69-year existence of the Soviet Union, only seven men led the communist nation. Within the span of 30 months during the early 1980s, three of these – Leonid Brezhnev, Yuri Andropov, and Konstantin Chernenko – died. With them perished the influence of a generation of hardline communists, and though it may not have been readily apparent, the days of the Soviet superpower were also numbered.

Leonid Brezhnev ruled the country as general secretary of the Communist Party for 18 years, but Andropov and Chernenko followed with a combined brief tenure from November 1982 to March 1985. With the death of Chernenko, Mikhail Gorbachev stepped into the breach. At the age of 54, Gorbachev was 20 years younger than his predecessor, and while offering something of a fresh perspective on the world, he also inherited a myriad of challenges.

The winds of political change had gained renewed velocity among the nations of the Soviet Bloc. In Poland, the Solidarity trade union gave voice to workers who sought democratic reforms. Elsewhere, latent nationalism and a yearning for democratic government were preparing to burst forth across Eastern Europe. Within the Soviet Union itself, the Baltic States were clamouring for independence while restless peoples with

their own sense of nationalism or ethnicity urged greater autonomy. In truth, non-Russian Soviet citizens had never fully embraced the concept of a real 'union', one that required them to assimilate into a national consciousness dominated by Russia.

However, the most immediate concern for Gorbachev was the obvious stagnation of the Soviet economy. Decades of planning had failed to deliver the promise of plenty, with the policy of resources being drawn from those according to their ability and redistributed in a classless society according to need bearing little fruit.

Eastern Europeans looked on with envy at the prosperous economies of the Western democracies, which had emerged from the doldrums of their own recessions in the late 1970s and early 1980s. In the USSR, store shelves were bare and shortages of foodstuffs, fuel, and other essentials plagued the people. East Germans perhaps felt the pinch of privation more keenly than any, just across the heavily guarded border from the flourishing, industrialised economic colossus of West Germany.

In a futile effort to prop up a pro-Soviet regime in Afghanistan, the Red Army was embroiled in a lengthy war against a primarily Islamist-driven insurgency. The cost in lives and money weighed heavily on the Soviet leadership, particularly in concert with the tremendous expense of the still competitive nuclear arms race. Building and maintaining the Soviet military machine had compromised the capacity of the Soviet economy to offer even modest improvements to its citizens' standard of living.

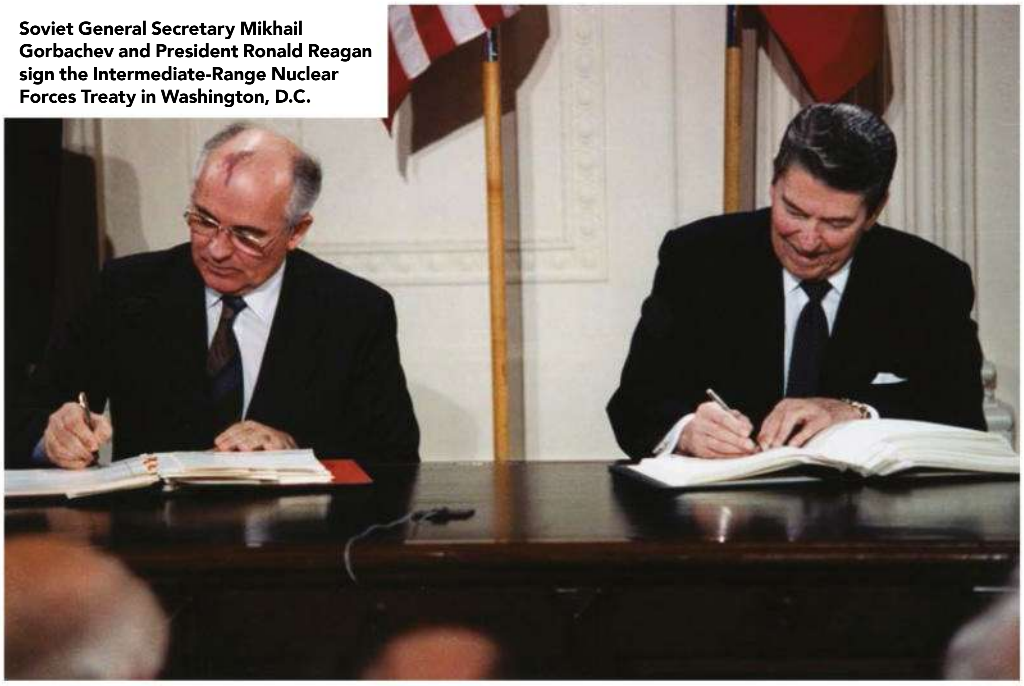
When Gorbachev came to power, he fully intended to hold the 15 republics of the Soviet Union together under the central government in Moscow, but the surge for independence and reform both within and outside the Soviet Union was undeniable. In the past, the threat of armed intervention by the mailed fist of the Soviet military had held independence movements in check. Now, however, Gorbachev could no longer completely depend on the leaders in satellite countries or the Soviet republics themselves to maintain control of their own populaces. Should the situation get out of hand during this perilous time, the military alternative was too disheartening to contemplate.

In the midst of such turmoil, relations with the United States had chilled with the 1979 invasion of Afghanistan and the U.S. retaliatory boycott of the 1980 Summer Olympics in Moscow. In November of that year, an overwhelming majority of the American electorate had propelled Ronald Reagan to the presidency, and the Soviet Union's traditional Cold War rival stepped up the pressure. By the autumn of 1983, relations between the superpowers reached a new low when a Soviet fighter jet downed Korean Airlines Flight 007 over the Sea of Japan, killing 269 people including Georgia congressman Larry McDonald.

The Reagan administration sensed an opportunity. Amid protests from anti-nuclear groups, in 1983 the United States deployed medium-range nuclear cruise and Pershing II missiles to Western Europe in response to the Soviet refusal to dismantle its own medium-range SS-20 ballistic missiles. That same year, Reagan announced the U.S. commitment to its Strategic

President Ronald Reagan delivers an impassioned address at the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin calling upon Mikhail Gorbachev to "Tear down this wall!"

Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev and President Ronald Reagan sign the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty in Washington, D.C.



Defense Initiative (SDI), popularly known as Star Wars, an anti-missile system based in outer space. The Soviets recoiled with concern that such a system would give the U.S. first-strike capability. Although it was years from deployment, the mere possibility that such a system might become operational was sobering.

The pragmatic Reagan also realised that the Soviets faced unprecedented economic pressure. He purposefully charted a course of revitalising the American military to address a perceived lack of parity in nuclear and conventional forces. The emphasis on restoring the U.S. military and its corresponding escalation in expenditures would oblige the Soviets to keep pace, further intensifying their already woeful economic situation, while in the near future the U.S. would urge negotiations on arms reduction from a position of strength.

Reagan's rhetoric also struck a worldwide chord. In a speech to the British House of Commons, he proclaimed, "…freedom and democracy will leave Marxism and Leninism on the ash heap of history." He referred to the Soviet Union as an "evil empire". On 12 June 1987, the president stood in the shadow of the Brandenburg Gate in the divided city of Berlin. For more than a quarter of a century, the Berlin Wall had stood as a symbol of Cold War politics, posturing and pain. Reagan boldly intoned, "General Secretary Gorbachev, if you seek peace, if you seek prosperity for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, if you seek liberalisation, come here to this gate. Mr Gorbachev, open this gate. Mr Gorbachev, tear down this wall!"

Indeed, the ascendance of Gorbachev had fostered opportunity. The new Soviet leader was compelled to address the deteriorating economic conditions. However, doing so required turning the focus of the government inward, which in turn meant reducing global tensions and curbing the military spending that had impoverished the USSR.

To implement his agenda, Gorbachev did have one strong card to play – nuclear arms reduction. He demonstrated a willingness to negotiate, and between the autumn of 1985 and the spring of 1988, the two most powerful men in the world held four summit meetings. At Reykjavik, Iceland, in 1986, they discussed abolishing nuclear weapons.

In December 1987, they concluded a landmark achievement of Cold War diplomacy. An entire class of nuclear weapons was eliminated with the signing of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty in Washington. Within months Gorbachev declared his intent to withdraw Soviet forces from Afghanistan.

Reagan and Gorbachev developed a personal relationship that facilitated their negotiations, providing both with precious time because of the tangible results they achieved. In May 1988, Reagan stood in Red Square within the fortress walls of the Kremlin. With Gorbachev by his side, the president declared that he no longer believed the Soviet Union was an evil empire. When a reporter pressed him on the subject, Reagan responded, "You are talking about another time, another era."

"IN HIS SPEECH TO THE UNITED NATIONS, GORBACHEV PLEDGED TO CONVERT THE SOVIET ECONOMY FROM ONE OF ARMAMENTS TO AN ECONOMY OF DISARMAMENT"

On 7 December 1988, Gorbachev addressed the United Nations General Assembly in New York. His words were electrifying. The Soviet leader spoke of global interdependence and "pan-humanist" values, dismissing class warfare, the basis of Soviet foreign policy for the previous 70 years. He pledged to convert the Soviet economy from one of "armaments to an economy of disarmament". His most stunning pronouncement was the assurance that the Soviet military would reduce its ground forces by half a million troops, that 50,000 soldiers would be withdrawn from Eastern Europe, and that arms would be reduced by 800 aircraft, 8,500 artillery systems, and 10,000 tanks within two years.

Gorbachev added, "Finally, being on U.S. soil, but also for other, understandable reasons, I cannot but turn to the subject of our relations with this great country… Relations between the Soviet Union and the United States of America span five and a half decades. The world has changed, and so have the nature, role and place of these relations in world politics. For too long they were built under the banner of confrontation, and sometimes of

A Soviet-built T-55 tank sits before the Opera House in Bucharest, Romania during the revolution that overthrew Nicolae Ceaușescu

hostility, either open or concealed. But in the last few years, throughout the world people were able to heave a sigh of relief, thanks to the changes for the better in the substance and atmosphere of the relations between Moscow and Washington."

While Gorbachev pursued a foreign policy of reconciliation, he implemented a two-pronged policy of reform within the Soviet Union. Glasnost, or 'openness', allowed greater personal freedoms, particularly freedom of speech and discourse on emerging political and social issues. Perestroika, or 'rebuilding', was a program of reform that Gorbachev hoped would stimulate the economy.

Meanwhile, President George H. W. Bush took office in the U.S. and initiated a reassessment of the nation's strategic objectives. Sceptics doubted the sincerity of Gorbachev's efforts. Others openly questioned their potential for success. Nevertheless, good relations were maintained between Washington and Moscow.

Gorbachev's sweeping reforms sent a clear message throughout the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Glasnost fostered an exchange of new ideas and released decades of pent-up anxiety and dissatisfaction. While the government did not interfere with the newly found freedom of expression, the economic benefits of perestroika did not immediately produce the positive results Gorbachev had hoped for. Glasnost allowed criticism of his policies to spread.

While Gorbachev's intentions were noble, the pace of events soon outstripped his ability to exert control. The landmark address to the UN opened the floodgates for rapid political and socioeconomic change in Eastern Europe. Gorbachev had virtually assured those who would

KEY FACTS Some interesting events related to the final years of the Cold War

FACT 1: Shortages of consumer goods in the Soviet Union became so severe that citizens were required to present coupons to buy socks.

FACT 2: To damage the Soviet economy, the U.S. pressed Saudi Arabia to increase oil production, devaluing the Soviet Union's primary export.

FACT 3: Although Ronald Reagan and Gorbachev were friendly, it's understood that First Lady Nancy Reagan and Raisa Gorbacheva endured an icy relationship.

FACT 4: Against the advice of government officials, President Reagan chose not to delete from his Berlin speech the thunderous "Tear down this wall!"

FACT 5: In 2004, Mikhail Gorbachev travelled to the United States to represent Russia at the funeral of former president Ronald Reagan.

Protestors take to the streets in Dushanbe, capital of Soviet Tajikistan, February 1990

accelerate regime change that the Red Army would not intervene. The former Soviet Bloc began to crumble.

Remarkably, most of the political reforms that occurred in Eastern Europe were accomplished peacefully. In the spring and summer of 1988, a pair of massive labour strikes brought the communist regime in Poland to the negotiating table. Communist rule ended within a year, and the first parliamentary elections were held; Lech Wałęsa was elected president in December 1989.

On 23 October 1989, the Republic of Hungary was proclaimed. Free elections took place the next spring. Simultaneously, the barrier between Hungary and neighbouring Austria was torn down without Soviet interference. Communist rule ended in Czechoslovakia in December 1989 as thousands of protesters shook keys in front of communist officials and taunted them with the chant "Your time is up!" Free elections occurred seven months later.

On 15 January 1990, the national assembly of Bulgaria abolished the rule guaranteeing the leading role of the communist party.

Yugoslavia started to disintegrate as Slovenia and Croatia declared independence. Years of civil war and ethnic cleansing followed. While unrest continues in the Balkans, the nations of the former Yugoslavia currently include Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Slovenia, FYR Macedonia and Serbia. Violence erupted in Romania, and communist dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu and his wife, Elena, were tried and executed on 25 December 1991.

The most dramatic change of government in Eastern Europe occurred in Germany. Erich Honecker, leader of the communist German Democratic Republic (GDR), was deposed by his own party in October 1989 just as the communists celebrated 40 years of the GDR. Two days after the observance, 70,000 protesters took to the streets of Berlin. A month later, Soviet troops stood aside and East German guards opened several gates along the Berlin Wall. Crowds soon gathered, and the Wall was torn down with sledgehammers in a flurry of freedom. East and West Germany were formally reunited in 1990.

> "CROWDS SOON GATHERED, AND THE BERLIN WALL WAS TORN DOWN WITH SLEDGEHAMMERS IN A FLURRY OF FREEDOM"

A month after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Gorbachev and Bush met on the island of Malta in the Mediterranean. Discussions concerning the reunification of Germany, the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty, and the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) were held. When the summit ended, a member of Gorbachev's staff told the media, "We buried the Cold War at the bottom of the Mediterranean Sea."

Gorbachev further demonstrated his good faith in the summer of 1990 by refraining from interference with U.S. efforts to assemble a military coalition to confront Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein and forcibly remove Iraqi forces from neighbouring Kuwait.

SPENDING INTO OBLIVION

An ailing Soviet economy helped to end the Cold War

Along with numerous political, diplomatic and social factors, the economic distress experienced in the Soviet Union in the 1980s was a major factor in ending the Cold War.

Although accurate figures may never be known, defence spending was undeniably prominent among the economic influencers of the Soviet Union's downfall. Some estimates suggest that in the mid-1980s up to 70 per cent of Soviet industrial output was devoted to the military. A KGB official who defected to the UK during the period suggested that at least one-third of Soviet industrial output was related to military spending. Western intelligence estimates placed Soviet military expenditure at between 12 and 20 per cent of the nation's gross national product. In 1987, the Soviet Union spent the equivalent of $128 billion on defence.

A study conducted in 1995 concluded that the United States had spent the truly astronomical sum of $4 trillion on the nuclear arms race during the Cold War.

At the same time, however, the cohesion of the Soviet Union, which Gorbachev had long sought to maintain, eroded rapidly. Estonia had demanded independence back in 1987, and the other Baltic States, Lithuania and Latvia, followed suit. Separatist movements in other non-Russian republics intensified, and Gorbachev faced a serious dilemma. Glasnost had given impetus to these movements, but his promises of reform would ring hollow were he to intervene via military or political means.

The Estonian initiative sparked independence movements across the Soviet Union, including Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, Belarus and the republics of Central Asia. By mid-1990, many of them had declared their independence.

In desperation, a group of hardline communist leaders hatched a coup d'état on 19 August 1991, kidnapping Gorbachev, holding him at a secret location in the resort town of Foros in the Crimea, and falsely announcing on state-run radio that the general secretary was ill and no longer able to hold office. The attempted coup ignited protests across the decaying Soviet Union, and when the hardliners attempted to mobilise the army to quell the disturbances, the soldiers refused to act.

Boris Yeltsin, who had recently been elected president of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic in the first election in Russian history, opposed the coup and with the backing of the Soviet citizenry called for the arrest of the conspirators. Within three days the plot fell apart as the hardliners surrendered. Yeltsin had already begun to exert significant influence on the course of events and openly criticised the slow pace of Gorbachev's economic reforms. As Gorbachev's power ebbed, the Bush administration gravitated closer to Yeltsin, the de facto power broker among the leaders of the former Soviet republics.

Although Gorbachev survived the coup, his political capital had been virtually wiped out. In a last-ditch effort to keep the Soviet Union together, he had proposed a union treaty that would provide greater autonomy to the republics. However, it was readily apparent that the reform movements would stop at nothing short of democracy.

On 6 November 1991, Yeltsin's government voted to ban all activities of the Communist Party in Russia. Yeltsin met with the leaders of Ukraine and Belarus on 8 December and agreed to form a new governmental entity, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), which included 11 former Soviet republics.

Powerless to hold back the tide of rapid change, Gorbachev met Yeltsin on 17 December 1991 and acknowledged the formation of the CIS. On 25 December, Gorbachev resigned. In his farewell address, the former Soviet leader lamented his failed attempt to keep the Soviet Union together, expressing concern "about the fact that the people in this country are ceasing to become citizens of a great power and the consequences may be very difficult for all of us to deal with".

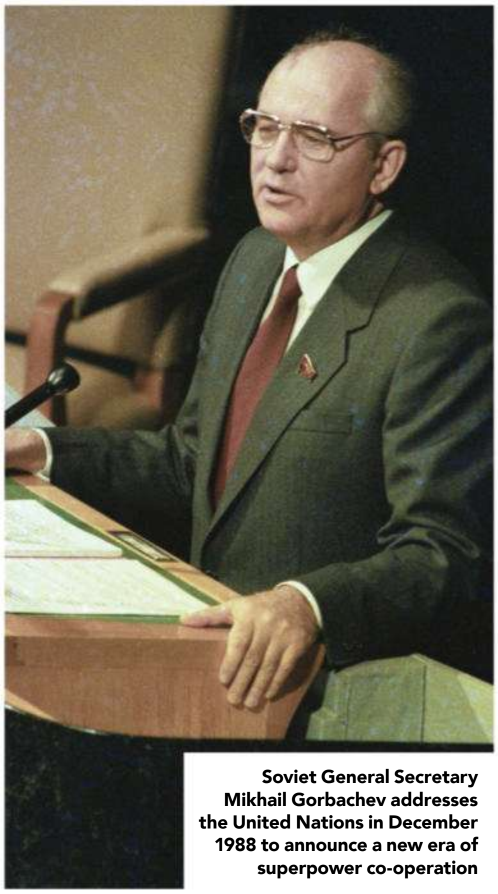
He justifiably claimed that he had presided over the Soviet journey down the "road to democracy" and had begun the arduous task of moving the nation's stagnant communist economy towards one embracing free enterprise and open markets.

Tremendous change lay ahead for the former Soviet Union. The newly emerging republics had to refine their own political systems, energise their own economies, settle territorial issues, and sometimes battle armed insurgencies and civil unrest. Naturally, so much remained uncertain. However, there was one absolute certainty. The Cold War, which had brought the world to the brink of a nuclear apocalypse and defined so much of global politics for decades, was over.

FIERY RETRIBUTION IN ROMANIA

How the most hardline communist leader in Europe was finally brought to account

Nicolae Ceaușescu came to power as general secretary of the Romanian Communist Party in 1965 and was proclaimed president of Romania in 1974. Initially moderate, his administration became increasingly authoritarian through the years. Ceaușescu maintained strict control of the media and crushed opposition with a Stalinist hand through his brutal secret police, the Securitate. Ceaușescu established an autocracy blending communism, nationalism and a pervasive cult of personality. Like other Eastern European nations, Romania experienced economic decline in the 1980s. However, Ceaușescu's own policies contributed to the erosion of the Romanian standard of living. Unrest grew steadily during the mid-1980s. When Ceaușescu ordered government troops to fire on protesters on 17 December 1989, he signed his own death warrant. Ceaușescu and his wife, Elena, fled the capital of Bucharest, but they were captured and executed by firing squad on live television on Christmas Day. More than 1,100 people died during the ensuing Romanian Revolution.



Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev addresses the United Nations in December 1988 to announce a new era of superpower co-operation

THE END IS NIGH

Politically undermined by a failed coup and faced with a mounting economic crisis despite his attempts to modernise the Soviet Union, in the winter of 1991 Mikhail Gorbachev reached a deal with Boris Yeltsin in which the former would announce his resignation as president and commander-in-chief before a bank of TV cameras inside the Kremlin on Christmas Day. Ultimately undone by a wave of independence movements that gained momentum due to his efforts to democratise the USSR, the end of Gorbachev's reign spelt doom for any lingering hopes of preserving the union.

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LOOTING THE MOTHERLAND

With the fall of the USSR, new president Boris Yeltsin tried to open a stagnant economy up to market forces. He got much more than he bargained for…

WRITTEN BY APRIL MADDEN

Nobody wanted the West's pity. Easy for the decadent capitalists, in their warm, comfortable homes, eating their hamburgers and pizzas and colourful American cereal, gawping at the international news on their lavish, shining TV networks, to feel sorry for poor Mother Russia. Moscow didn't need their sympathy. And it certainly didn't need the West's patronising, self-congratulatory charity. They could take their Live Aid and their Unicef and their Comic Relief, and they could shove it. It was up to Russians to fix Russian problems, and fix them they would.

In the late 1980s the West was in the heady throes of a booming economy, and the yanking back of the Iron Curtain was revealing it to ordinary Russians. Cars, fast food, consumer electronics, fashion, toys, and brands, brands, brands: the West had it all, and now the Soviet people wanted it too. And their new president knew that unless he made strides to get it for them then he'd have another bloody revolution on his hands.

The Russians' experience of the fall of the Iron Curtain was very different to that of other nations in the communist bloc. Notably, East Germany toppled the Berlin Wall to reveal not the shabby, isolated West Berlin still reeling from the reparations of World War II that it expected but a lively international metropolis, its postwar homes and businesses rebuilt stronger with the aid of international partners, its well-heeled people welcoming long-lost friends and family with open arms holding the kind of food and gifts East Berliners could only have dreamt of.

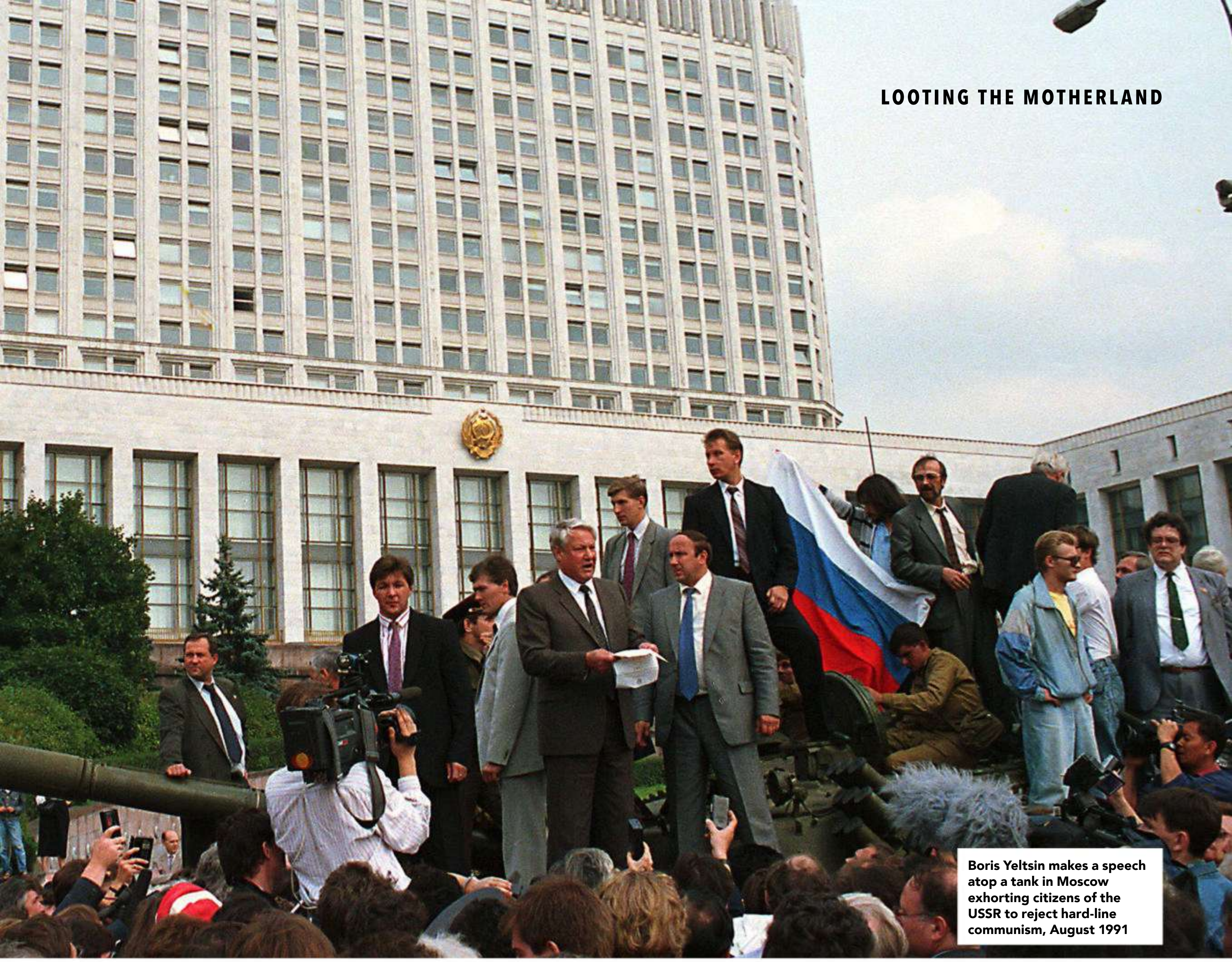
By contrast, the perestroika reforms of the USSR's Gorbachev government, intended to shore up the socialist regime in the grip of economic stagnation, had only added to the Soviet Union's woes. The Gorbachev regime had allowed free enterprise and the private ownership of businesses for the first time since the installation of Lenin's revolutionary government, while at the same time handing the controls of state-owned businesses to workers' collectives. Surplus product could now be sold for profit rather than stockpiled. But the Law on State Enterprise and the Law on Cooperatives didn't go far enough. They trod a muddy and shambling line between socialism and capitalism,

"THE WEST HAD IT ALL, AND NOW THE SOVIET PEOPLE WANTED IT TOO"

ОБМЕН
ВАЛЮТЫ
EXCHANGE

In 1994, it was better value to exchange rubles for U.S. dollars to spend at grey and black markets in the struggling CIS economy

The nomenklatura had special passes allowing them exclusive access to Moscow's GUM department store on Saturday mornings. This woman is being refused entry



Boris Yeltsin makes a speech atop a tank in Moscow exhorting citizens of the USSR to reject hard-line communism, August 1991

and for many ordinary Russians they managed to provide the worst of both worlds with none of the benefits of either. Food shortages were no longer to be alleviated by the state, nor would (or could) it prop up ailing industries. The workers' collectives that had stepped in to take over meant well but were inexperienced – nobody outside the upper echelons of the machine of state had run a business for over 60 years – and anyway their hands were tied by the fact that Gorbachev's reforms, intended to stave off a crisis of socialism rather than stand toe-to-toe with capitalist Europe, didn't go far enough to create a functioning national market. There were cucumbers on the shelves for the first time in years, but nobody had any bread to eat them with.

Minister Boris Yeltsin, always a firebrand, had resigned from the Politburo in 1987 in protest, saying that the perestroika reforms didn't go far enough and would cause an economic disaster. He turned his back on communism and began to call for the Soviet Union to transition to multi-party democracy. In 1991, the tired, hungry, disaffected people of the Soviet Union elected him president in the hope that he had an answer to their problems. He did, but it was a hard one. In October 1991, he announced that the Soviet economy would be undergoing "shock therapy". He would be transitioning the economy from a stagnant socialist one to that of a free market. Poland had done so two years before, and it had worked for them.

Poland, however, despite its enforced postwar flirtation with communism, was traditionally viewed as an ally by the world's then economic powerhouse, the United States. It benefitted from their financial and advisory aid, as well as that of the International Monetary Fund. The Soviet Union, though – the 'evil empire' that Cold War America had set itself against – did not. Maybe it really had seen the light of capitalist democracy, or maybe that was just yet another Russian psyops ruse. Whatever the case, no U.S. aid – or trade – would be forthcoming for Moscow. When Yeltsin ordered communist price controls on goods to be lifted, his radical policy, combined with the Russian central banks' inexperienced handling of the transition to a free market economy, caused inflation to skyrocket. Western society was appalled by media images of Russians standing in bread lines with wheelbarrows full of worthless rubles, and American President George H. W. Bush eventually made diplomatic overtures to the belaboured Yeltsin government during the Christmas of 1991. The Soviet Union had just been dissolved, and in its wake had risen the CIS, or Commonwealth of Independent States.

A few weeks before the dissolution of the Soviet Union a new minister had joined the Yeltsin cabinet. Anatoly Chubais was an economic reformist and an associate professor at the Leningrad Institute of Engineering and Economic Sciences in St Petersburg. The head of Rosimushchestvo, the Federal Agency for State Property Management, Chubais was a proponent of privatisation and argued that the rapid transfer of state industries to non-governmental entities had worked well for Hungary on its journey to becoming a Western economy. The Congress of People's Deputies, however, gun-shy after perestroika and hyperinflation, disagreed; they favoured the ideas of economist Vitaly Nayshul instead. Nayshul believed that voucher privatisation was the way to go: instead of the new privately owned companies trading on a stock exchange, citizens were issued books of vouchers that entitled them to shares in formerly state-owned industries.

This more socialist-sounding method seemed preferable to the Congress of People's Deputies, and had enjoyed moderate success in the former Czechoslovakia after the Velvet Revolution of 1989. The Congress also thought this method would prevent Bratva – the Russian mafia – and the nomenklatura, the former executive management class of the USSR, from becoming overly wealthy and powerful in the new economy. Bratva had organisational power and access to ready black market cash, while the nomenklatura were dangerously close to (sometimes even drawn from) the old Tsarist elite. They were urbane, devious, more experienced in business and had an active interest in maintaining the status quo.

Chubais was put in the unfortunate position of spearheading and advocating for a policy he had initially opposed. Nonetheless, the Russian people embraced it, with around 98 per cent of adults participating in the scheme. But they didn't stay in it for long. The rigours of life in a free market economy were new and unexpected, and very soon shadier, wealthier members of society were approaching cash-strapped Russians with attractive offers to buy their shares vouchers.

Election cycles were a new concept in the former USSR, and as the next one rolled around in the mid-'90s, Yeltsin realised that not only did he need to woo a populace who had been promised circuses along with their bread and so far got neither, but he also needed money to fund an election campaign. Loans For Shares was like an official version of the rich buying shares vouchers from the poor, only on a macroeconomic scale. Proposed by banker Vladimir Potanin (who made out like a bandit on the back of the scheme and is now a billionaire), it allowed banks and businessmen to loan money to the Yeltsin government in exchange for shares in newly privatised Russian companies. It was open internationally, with the hope that this would encourage Western investors to bring their wealth of experience to Russian boardrooms, restructuring former Soviet industries by cutting through leftover communist bureaucracy and creating modern, agile businesses ready for international commerce. While the World Bank and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) made some small, careful, politically motivated loans that won them a small stake in Siberian oil firm Sibneft Oil (now Gazprom Neft), the bulk of Loans For Shares purchases were made by a rising class of newly powerful Russian businessmen: the so-called oligarchs. These financially savvy nouveau riche had already benefitted from running businesses and buying up shares vouchers, but now there were bigger fish for them to land.

A key term of the scheme was that the oligarchs would not be able to bid for the shares they wanted until after the election, ensuring that Yeltsin's government got their cash and remained in power. But if Yeltsin thought that they would continue to prop up his presidency afterwards, he was wrong. Increasingly erratic and prone to drunkenness, he was becoming a loose cannon, and the ever-increasing media coverage his private enterprise partners deliberately bought for him revealed this to the watching public in Russia and beyond, allowing voluble, drunken Yeltsin to become a joke on TV shows and in newspapers worldwide, toppling his presidency from within. Yeltsin's promotion of Western democracy and capitalism didn't suit a class who, it was whispered, had taken advantage of the economic chaos of perestroika and the early Yeltsin government to help themselves to state assets that maybe hadn't

An elderly Russian couple in 1991. Hyperinflation made their 200-ruble monthly pension worth the equivalent of just ten U.S. dollars

Boris Yeltsin announces his resignation in 1991. His successor, Vladimir Putin (left), would vow to destroy the oligarch class if elected, but in practice he enabled them

ДАЕШЬ ПЕРЕСТРОЙКУ!

Soviet citizens celebrate the start of the perestroika reforms in 1987. Sadly these much-needed reforms would not go far enough to save the economy

Russians spent hours queuing to purchase basic foods in state-owned shops like this Moscow fishmonger, 1991

been on the table at all. They had gotten rich very, very quickly indeed. The Loans For Shares auctions, it was alleged, had been rigged.

For a newer breed of oligarch, one who wasn't a Yeltsinite visionary or who hadn't come from the pragmatic, wait-and-see architecture of the nomenklatura, Yeltsin had to go before he opened the Pandora's box of Western democratic transparency on the murky privatisation of the Motherland's assets and exposed those who had their hands in the till. Instead they needed someone strict, motivated, a strongman unlike the shambolic Yeltsin, one who would combine the authoritarianism that would keep them – and him – in power with a keen financial sense of acquisition that would continue to allow certain oligarchs free rein over Russian business. They chose as their man a member of Yeltsin's cabinet, a former KGB officer who had spent his political career managing the security services before rising to the dizzy heights of prime minister. When Yeltsin was forced to resign in 1999, he stepped in as acting president before being officially elected four months later. He hasn't been out of power since. His name is Vladimir Putin.

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